

# **Feminism, Epistemology & Morality**

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Doctor Rerum Politicarum  
University of Bergen, Norway  
2005

UNIVERSITETET I BERGEN

ISBN 82-308-0062-6  
Bergen, Norway 2005  
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2005

## *Preface*

Funding from NFR's theory of science project and the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bergen, made it possible to write this thesis. Several people have read and commented upon previous versions of the thesis or parts of it. Their critique has been extremely valuable to me. I owe all of them something, and some of them a lot (more than they themselves are aware of). I thank them by name as I go along. None of these generous people are responsible for the many weaknesses of this thesis.

Thank you, friends and loved ones, you who take care of me, stand by me, and share my commitments and worries. Without your presence, patience and encouragement, I could have done nothing.

# CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION.....1**

## **PART I**

**Feminist Epistemology.....3**

### **CHAPTER 1**

**SUSAN HAACK’S CRITIQUE OF FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY.....4**

1.0 A feminist epistemology?.....4

1.1 “Confessions of an Old-Fashioned Prig”.....6

1.1.1 Value-free justification of theories.....6

1.1.2 Feminist epistemology: Democratic epistemology, social epistemology and women’s ways of knowing.....7

1.2 Defending value-freedom against democratic imperialists.....8

1.2.1 The sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true.....8

1.2.2 Whether a theory is justified depends, however, only on features indicative of its truth, not its significance.....10

1.2.3 A theory is most probably true if it can be demonstrated that it is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence.....11

1.2.4 Values express subjective wishes or desires.....17

i) Values as virtues.....18

ii) Values as justified moral standards.....19

1.2.5 The wish or desire that P provides no evidential support for P.....22

1.2.6 Thus, justification of theories cannot refer to values.....22

1.3 Countering radical interpretations of “science as social”.....23

1.3.1 Inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking – wholly a matter of social negotiation?.....24

1.3.2 Inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking – partly a matter of social negotiation?.....25

1.3.3 The good, sober sociology of science.....27

1.4 Escaping women’s standpoint.....29

**CHAPTER 2**  
**THE ARGUMENT FOR VALUE-FREEDOM: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT.....33**

2.0 Justification of theories – a value-free endeavor?.....33

2.1 Assessing the first premise.....33

2.1.1 Separating significance from truth.....33

2.1.2 Haack’s notion of discretion.....34

2.2 Assessing the second premise.....35

2.2.1 Significant theories – not only true.....35

2.2.2 Why inquiring about features indicative of truth confronts the inquirer with ought-questions.....36

i) Is, can and ought.....36

ii) The value of theoretical virtues.....38

iii) Value-laden concepts and distinctions in factual propositions.....39

iv) Burdens of judgment.....41

v) Significance – a question of values.....42

2.3 Assessing the third premise.....46

2.3.1 Supported by evidence. What does it mean in the human and social sciences?.....46

2.3.2 Apel reads Peirce: A realist discourse theory of truth.....49

2.3.3 Comparing Apel and Haack – elaboration, discussion and critique.....52

i) Common features.....52

ii) Epistemology with or without moral philosophy?.....53

iii) Redescriptions and validity-claims.....55

iv) Tacit knowledge.....57

*The not-possible clause*

*Tacit values*

*Confirmation or truth?*

v) Truth and justification.....63

vi) The morality of truth.....67

vii) Metaphysical realism.....69

2.4 Assessing the fourth premise.....71

2.4.1 Haack’s notion of values as subjective wishes or desires.....71

2.4.2 Haack’s notion of values as virtues.....74

2.4.3 Haack’s notion of values as moral standards.....75

2.4.4 The question of values in inquiry: A question beyond values.....76

i) Truth and morality.....77

ii) Morality and ethics.....79

iii) Ethical claims and theoretical justification.....81

2.4.5 Representation, civility and democracy.....84

i) Cognitive and intellectual authority.....84

ii) Tempered meritocracy in truth-seeking.....	85
iii) Equal respect in truth-seeking.....	86
iv) Democracy in value-laden inquiry.....	89
2.4.6 What is the political?.....	91
2.5 Assessing the fifth premise.....	92
2.6 A different conclusion.....	95

**CHAPTER 3**  
**SCIENCE AS SOCIAL AND THE ARGUMENT FOR VALUE-FREEDOM.....97**

3.0 Moderates – in favor of value-freedom?.....	97
3.1 Wholly a matter of social negotiation? A re-assessment.....	98
3.1.1 Moderates among the radicals.....	98
3.1.2 Misconceived concessions.....	99
3.2 Partly a matter of social negotiation? A re-assessment.....	100
3.3 A good, sober sociology of science: A different suggestion.....	101
3.3.1 Good science without good philosophy?.....	101
3.3.2 The internal and external organization of science.....	103
3.3.3 Debating science as social: From camps to arguments.....	104

**CHAPTER 4**  
**FEMINIST STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY: A RECONSTRUCTED CRITIQUE.....106**

4.0 Should epistemology embody some specifically feminist insight?.....	106
4.1 Why stress the feminist case? Sexism in science and society.....	106
4.1.1 Haack’s general suspicion.....	106
4.1.2 Sexism in the natural sciences?.....	109
4.2 Sandra Harding’s feminist standpoint epistemology: An assessment.....	110
4.2.1 Harding’s good reasons.....	111
4.2.2 Why grant women epistemic privilege? Harding’s eight reasons.....	113
4.2.3 Women’s different reasoning.....	119
4.2.4 Should women’s different reasoning grant them cognitive privilege?.....	121
4.2.5 From unequal cognitive authority to unequal intellectual authority.....	124
4.2.6 From women’s reasoning to women’s emotions?.....	126
4.2.7 When women claim different things.....	127
4.2.8 From women’s standpoint to feminist standpoint.....	128

4.2.9 What is a woman?.....	130
4.2.10 Women’s oppression as truth-functional?.....	131
4.3 Concluding remarks.....	132

## **PART II**

### **Feminism in a State Feminist System.....133**

#### **CHAPTER 5**

#### **FEMINIST CRITIQUE: THE NORWEGIAN CASE.....134**

5.0 “[...] intense discussions about modernity”.....	134
5.1 The significance of the Norwegian case.....	136
5.2 The period of self-reflection – a historical perspective.....	138
5.3 Methodological considerations.....	142
5.4 Criticism of the thinking of modernity.....	147
5.4.1 The conservatism of modern thought.....	147
5.4.2 The patriarchal project of modernity.....	156
i) Modern history – a history of patriarchy.....	156
ii) The modern canon of patriarchal thinkers.....	161
5.4.3 The abstractions of modernity.....	167
5.4.4 Critique of the modern autonomous subject.....	175
5.4.5 Epistemology and methodology.....	184
5.4.6 Feminist strategies.....	198
5.4.7 The problems of universalism.....	204
5.4.8 Individualism and the good community.....	214
5.4.9 Equality and power.....	227
5.4.10 The public and the private.....	232
5.4.11 Capitalism and patriarchy.....	239
5.4.12 Rationality, femininity and sentiments.....	244
5.4.13 The aesthetical transcending the modern.....	251
5.4.14 Below the surface – phenomenology, existentialism, ontology.....	254
5.4.15 Modernity, nature and culture.....	258
5.5 The modern imaginary challenged.....	261
5.5.1 A summary.....	261
i) The conservatism of modern thought.....	261
ii) Modern history – a history of patriarchy.....	262
iii) The modern canon of patriarchal thinkers.....	262
iv) The abstractions of modernity.....	262
v) Critique of the modern autonomous subject.....	263
vi) Epistemology and methodology.....	264
vii) Feminist strategies.....	264



viii) The problems of universalism.....	265
ix) Individualism and the good community.....	265
x) Equality and power.....	265
xi) The public and the private.....	266
xii) Capitalism and patriarchy.....	266
xiii) Rationality, femininity and sentiments.....	267
xiv) The aesthetical transcending the modern.....	267
xv) Below the surface – phenomenology, existentialism, ontology.....	267
xvi) Modernity, nature and culture.....	268
5.5.2 A brief remark on assessment.....	268

## 5.6 Academic-feminist self-reflection in Norway after 1990 – some characteristics.....269

5.6.1 A critical interpretation of modern thought.....	269
5.6.2 The Norwegian appropriation of feminist theory.....	271
5.6.3 A reflexive turn without normative theory.....	271

## 5.7 Why reflexivity?.....272

5.7.1 Some suggestions.....	272
i) A new generation, a new paradigm?.....	272
ii) International trends?.....	273
iii) A trend of modern times?.....	273
iv) Reflexivity as academization and de-politicization?.....	274
v) From state feminism to reflexive feminism?.....	275
5.7.2 The distinctiveness of Norwegian self-reflection: Some interpretations.....	275
i) The critical interpretation of modernity.....	275
ii) The national distinctiveness.....	276
iii) What about normativity?.....	277

## **CHAPTER 6** **STATE FEMINISM AND THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP IDEAL.....278**

6.0 The normative basis of Norwegian political feminism.....	278
6.1 Woman-friendly social democracy: Solidaric republicanism.....	280
6.1.1 From state patriarchy to state feminism.....	280
6.1.2 State feminism, women’s professions and women’s participation.....	282
6.1.3 The Scandinavian system and the woman-friendly society.....	283
6.1.4 The social-democratic ideal of citizenship.....	286
6.1.5 Social and political citizenship and the value of community.....	288
6.1.6 Towards a woman-friendly social democracy.....	289
6.1.7 Citizenship under welfare state capitalism.....	291
6.2 Critical perspectives on state feminism and social democracy.....	292

6.2.0 Woman-friendly social democracy: A summary.....	292
6.2.1 Social democracy and private autonomy: The liberal deficit.....	293
6.2.2 Political citizenship and the representation of women.....	298
6.2.3 Employment, production and social rights.....	300
6.2.4 Community values and social-democratic citizenship.....	302
6.3 State feminism and the period of self-reflection.....	305

**PART III  
ELABORATIONS.....309**

**CHAPTER 7  
RICHARD RORTY, FEMINISM AND MORAL UNIVERSALISM.....310**

Exkurs: Richard Rorty and Nancy Fraser.....	324
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**CHAPTER 8  
THE PRINCIPLE OF GENDER BALANCE.....328**

8.0 Feminist equality – perfect equality?.....	328
8.1 Freedom and balance.....	328
8.2 Individual and group.....	329
8.3 Balance of equality in what?.....	329
8.4 Choices and circumstances.....	330
8.5 Nancy Fraser on <i>parité</i> .....	330
8.6 Justification of balance.....	331
8.7 Gender and other differences.....	332
8.8 Is and ought.....	332
8.9 Principles and policies.....	333
8.10 The limits of state power.....	333

**CHAPTER 9  
THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY: A FEMINIST RE-INTERPRETATION...335**

9.0 Privacy – for feminists?.....	335
9.1 Feminist critique of the private-public divide: Empirical and moral.....	336
9.2 Feminism, politics and the public sphere.....	337

9.3 The right to privacy as a precondition for critique of the public sphere....338  
9.4 The moral right to privacy.....340  
9.5 Conventional conceptions of privacy: A critique.....342  
9.6 The struggle for women’s privacy.....344

**APPENDIX**  
**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS.....348**

**LITERATURE.....376**

# INTRODUCTION

What is critique? What does it mean to be critical? In his study of the history of the concept of critique, *Kritik und Krise*, Reinhard Koselleck defines critique as the art of making judgments about something with reference to some standard.<sup>1</sup> We may, for example, criticize a claim about state of affairs with reference to standards of truth, a norm with reference to standards of rightness, or a piece of art with reference to standards of beauty. This claim is not true, we say, assuming when doing so, a standard of some kind defining what conditions would have to be satisfied for something to be true. This norm is not just, we say, assuming when doing so, a standard of some kind defining what conditions would have to be satisfied for something to be just. This painting is not beautiful, we say, assuming when doing so, a standard of some kind defining what conditions would have to be satisfied for something to be beautiful.

Which our standards of critique should be, is a topic for debate.<sup>2</sup> In this dissertation I present, discuss and assess, from various perspectives, how feminists have approached this topic. What standards of critique do feminists defend? How do they justify their standards? Are the standards feminists defend defensible? These are central questions in the following chapters. I address these questions from a limited set of specific angles. Much can and has been said about feminist critique that is not touched upon in my deliberations.<sup>3</sup>

Part I, Chapters 1-4, is called *Feminist epistemology*. Feminism is a social movement with roots in the political and intellectual struggles of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Europe (Arneil 1999), it is a normative political philosophy (Mansbridge and Okin 1993, Hampton 1997, Kymlicka 2002), and it is, moreover, often regarded as a particular approach to ethics and moral philosophy (Grimshaw 1991). In recent years feminism has, however, also been introduced as an epistemology. An extensive literature on feminist epistemology has been

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<sup>1</sup> A similar definition of critique is introduced in Seyla Benhabib's study of critical theory, *Critique, Norm and Utopia*.

<sup>2</sup> As are related questions, for example the question of *where* our standards of critique come from. In *Rationalität, Recht und Gesellschaft* Bernhard Peters outline a typology of social critique framed as a set of different answers to this question. I advance this typology in Holst (forthcoming a), where I distinguish between social critique as pragmatic critique, as technocratic critique, as immanent critique, as critique based on real contradictions, as critique of social pathologies and as morally justified critique. Social critique is, however, only one kind of critique.

<sup>3</sup> To my mind, one of the best introductions to the topic still is *Feminism as Critique* edited by Seyla Benhabib and Drucilla Cornell, published almost twenty years ago.

published.<sup>4</sup> On this point feminism differs from other comparable -isms, such as liberalism and socialism. Marxism has indeed inspired epistemological critique; questioning of prevalent ideas of objectivity and good science. In contemporary epistemology and philosophy of science there are, however, relatively few who intervene as ‘socialists’ or ‘Marxists’. Feminist epistemology has, on the contrary, experienced a flourishing period the last twenty years.

The efforts of feminist epistemologists are controversial. In Chapter 1 I introduce the philosopher and feminist<sup>5</sup> Susan Haack’s extensive and sharp critique of the project of a feminist epistemology. In Chapters 2-4 I discuss Haack’s critique and outline how I believe the relationship between feminism and epistemology should be conceived. My notion of this relationship differs significantly from Haack’s notion. It differs, however, also substantially from positions taken by leading figures in contemporary feminist epistemology.

Part II, Chapters 5 and 6, is called *Feminism in a state feminist system*. The state feminist system in focus is the Norwegian one. In Chapter 5 I present and discuss the debate on standards of critique in Norwegian academic feminism after 1990. Hence, I move from a discussion of the standards of critique introduced by feminists in the field of epistemology and philosophy of science (Part I), to an analysis of the meta-debates in a very different academic field: Norwegian feminist research. In Chapter 6 I explicate and discuss the normative basis of the state feminist political regime surrounding this academic field.

Part III, Chapters 7-9, is simply called *Elaborations*. In these chapters I address three concerns in feminist debates on standards of critique that have been only touched upon in previous chapters:<sup>6</sup> The relationship between feminism and moral universalism (Chapter 7), between feminism and a particular notion of equality as gender balance (Chapter 8), and between feminism and the public-private division (Chapter 9).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> For a good overview, see “Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science” in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-epistemology/>).

<sup>5</sup> She defends feminism as an ethical and political project.

<sup>6</sup> Which leaves many other concerns only touched upon in this dissertation unaddressed.

<sup>7</sup> I wish to thank Judith Larsen and Ursula Phillips for spending many working hours trying to improve the English of this dissertation. Judith Larsen has, moreover, translated previous versions of Chapters 6-9. I also wish to thank Jørgen Melve who assisted me during the last busy months.

# **PART I**

## **Feminist Epistemology**

# CHAPTER 1

## SUSAN HAACK'S CRITIQUE OF FEMINIST EPISTEMOLOGY<sup>8</sup>

### 1.0 A feminist epistemology?

There is no such connection between feminism and the theory of knowledge as the fashionable rubric 'feminist epistemology' requires. One can be – I am – an epistemologist and a feminist; but 'feminist epistemology' is as incongruous as it sounds (Haack 1998: 3).

This quotation is taken from the introduction to *Manifesto of a Passionate Moderate. Unfashionable Essays* (1998) by Susan Haack.<sup>9</sup> She elaborates in one of the essays:

[...] it is not appropriate to describe my epistemological position as 'feminist' *anything* [...]. The point isn't that I don't think sexism in scientific theorizing is often bad science; I do. It isn't that I don't care about justice for women; I do. It isn't that I don't think there are legitimate feminist questions about science – ethical and political questions – about access to scientific careers, about funding priorities, about application of scientific discoveries; I do. It is, rather, that I see the aspiration to a feminist epistemology of science – to an epistemology which embodies some specifically feminist insight, that is, rather than simply having the label stuck on adventitiously – as encouraging the politicization of inquiry; which, by my lights, whether in the interests of good political values or bad, is always epistemologically unsound (original emphasis, op.cit.: 118-119).

Feminism, according to Haack, is an "ethical and political" project that is "good" (ibid.). However, because "values" should not shape inquiry; because *any* "politicization of inquiry" is indefensible, a feminist commitment should not spur us to re-articulate our epistemological

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<sup>8</sup> Previous drafts of Chapters 1-4 have been presented at the Department of Philosophy, at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology in Trondheim, at the Center for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities, University of Bergen, at the Center for Technology, Innovation and Culture, University of Oslo, at the Vatnahalsen-seminar of NFR's theory of science project, at the dr.polit.-seminar at the Department of Sociology, University of Bergen, and at the Philosophy & Social Science Roundtable in Prague, May 2003. I wish to thank participants on these occasions for comments, in particular Gunnar Skirbekk, Anders Molander, Ragnar Fjelland, Torben Hviid-Nielsen, Mathias Kaiser, Truls Wyller, Bengt Molander, May Thorseth, Vidar Enebakk, Øyvind Giæver, Rune Nydal, Arve Monsen, Bente Nicolaysen, Asun St. Claire, Hans-Tore Hansen, Ove Skarpenes, Lars-Ove Seljestad, Roger Hestholm, Trond Løyning, Maeve Cooke and Hartmund Rosa. I am also grateful for valuable comments from Harald Grimen, Margareta Bertilsson and Gaute Torsvik.

<sup>9</sup> Susan Haack is British, was educated at Cambridge and Oxford, and is now Professor of Philosophy and Professor of Law at the University of Miami.

stance (ibid.); “the project of a feminist epistemology of science [...] is neither sound epistemology nor sound feminism” (op.cit.: 104).<sup>10</sup>

Why does Haack insist on keeping inquiry value-neutral or value-free?<sup>11</sup> Why does she consider the idea of a feminist epistemology so outrageous? In *Manifesto* Haack presents a familiar ideal of value-free inquiry, an ideal many scientific practitioners probably would consider obvious – or at least not obviously mistaken. Historically, ideals of value-freedom in inquiry have been defended by central philosophical figures, such as Max Weber and Karl Popper. Arguments for value-freedom also occur routinely in contemporary debates in epistemology and philosophy of science. Haack’s contribution is, however, exceptional in that it connects an elaborated defense of value-freedom with a profound and detailed dismissal of feminist epistemology. This critical endeavor, perhaps “the sharpest response yet”<sup>12</sup> to the feminist interventions in epistemological debates, deserves serious consideration from anyone who regards her epistemological position to be feminist *something*.<sup>13</sup> In this chapter my ambition is to reconstruct Haack’s argument<sup>14</sup> in a way that takes its complexity into account.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Haack’s critique of feminist epistemology is part of a more general critique of “democratic epistemologies” (1998: 113); of “radical” sociological and literary approaches in science studies (op.cit.: 48-89, 104-136) – “vulgar pragmatism”, in particular as it has been developed by Richard Rorty (op.cit.: 7-47, 1993: 182-202) – and of the “scientism” of “naturalistic epistemology”, in particular as it has been developed within cognitive psychology (1993: 118-138). *Manifesto*, moreover, has the so-called science wars as its backdrop (see Enebakk 2004), the heated debate in recent years between those who prefer sociological approaches in the study of science – referred to in *Manifesto* as “the New Cynics” – and those who prefer rational approaches – referred to in *Manifesto* as “the Old Deferentialists” (1998: 90-103). Haack is often positioned in the latter group, recently by Helen Longino (2002a: 49-51). Haack herself considers, however, her position to be a third way approach (1998: 91-103). Philip Kitcher supports her on this point (2002: 558). The different ways Longino and Kitcher position Haack makes sense given their different outline of the two science wars camps (see Longino 2002b, 2002c). How the science wars should be interpreted is a complex issue. My concern is that Haack’s way – whether a third way or not – is an inadequate one.

<sup>11</sup> It can be argued that a requirement of value-freedom in inquiry is more demanding than a requirement of value-neutrality. Value-neutral inquiry may be conceived not as inquiry free from values but more weakly, as inquiry dealing with values in an impartial manner. Haack uses the terms interchangeably, but subscribes to a requirement of value-freedom in the context of justification: Values should not influence justification of theories.

<sup>12</sup> As summed up by Elizabeth Anderson (1995a: 32).

<sup>13</sup> Contemporary feminist epistemologists mostly debate *how* an adequate feminist epistemology should be developed, not *whether* and *why* it is necessary for feminists to pursue particular epistemological approaches at all. This is not obvious, however, and needs separate consideration.

<sup>14</sup> I refer mostly to *Manifesto* where Haack explicates her argument against feminist epistemology. I have, however, also consulted her more detailed discussions in *Evidence and Inquiry. Towards Reconstruction in Epistemology* (1993).

<sup>15</sup> It is its complexity that makes it a serious challenge to feminist epistemology. Feminist epistemologists focus too much on refuting crude doctrines of value-freedom. Such refutations are valid, but not very interesting, because not many contemporary epistemologists would maintain, for example, the “weak” conception of objectivity as outlined (and criticized) by Sandra Harding (1991: 145), or defend “the God trick” as outlined (and criticized) by Donna Haraway (1996: 257).



## 1.1 “Confessions of an Old-Fashioned Prig”<sup>16</sup>

### 1.1.1 Value-free justification of theories

The first question to be asked is what kind of “politicization of inquiry” Haack dismisses.<sup>17</sup> In what more specific sense should inquiry be kept value-free? Elizabeth Anderson sums up:

Feminists have long argued that scientific practice should promote women’s interests by removing discriminatory barriers that prevent women from participating in research, by developing technologies that empower women (such as safe, inexpensive birth control), and by paying due regard to women’s actual achievements in science and other endeavors. Many who attack the idea of value-laden inquiry are willing to accept such political influences on the conduct of inquiry, because such influences are not thought to touch what they see as the core of scientific integrity: the methods and standards of justification for theoretical claims. These influences affect the context of discovery (where the choice of subjects of investigation and of colleagues is open to influence by the interests of the inquirer or of those who fund the research) or the context of practical application (which, involving action, is always subject to moral scrutiny), not the context of justification (1995a: 28).

Haack seems “willing to accept” precisely these kinds of “political influences on the conduct of inquiry” (ibid.). She considers her feminist commitment to have implications in the context of discovery as well as in the context of practical application: There are “legitimate feminist questions about science – ethical and political questions – about access to scientific careers, about funding priorities, about application of scientific discoveries” (1998: 118-119). In both contexts it is appropriate to “care about justice for women” (ibid.). In the context of justification the case is different: Justification of theories should be value-free, Haack maintains. Inquirers should not let ethical-political considerations<sup>18</sup> influence the assessment of theories: It is “imperialist” to let feminist considerations influence “what theories one

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<sup>16</sup> This is the title of the introductory essay in *Manifesto*. Haack explains her choice of title: “Richard Rorty [...] describes philosophers who think of themselves as seeking the truth as lovably old-fashioned prigs” (1998: 7).

<sup>17</sup> Haack’s essays focus on scientific inquiry. There is, however, in her view, nothing inherently exceptional regarding scientific inquiry (even though Old Deferentialists have sometimes assumed that there is): “[...] the problem of demarcating science from non-science [...] is no preoccupation of mine” (1993: 96). Haack’s prescriptions are thus meant to be of relevance to “genuine inquiry” generally: “A better way sees science, not as privileged, but as distinguished epistemically; as deserving, if you will, respect rather than deference [...]. Our standards of what constitutes good, honest, thorough inquiry and what constitutes good, strong, supportive evidence are not internal to science. In judging where science has succeeded and where it has failed [...], we are appealing to the standards by which we judge the solidity of empirical beliefs, or the rigor and thoroughness of empirical inquiry, generally (Nor, of course, is science the *only* source of knowledge)” (original emphasis, 1998: 94). Science as we know it, has, however, in her view, “succeeded extraordinarily well, by and large, by our standards of empirical evidence” (op.cit.: 95), even though her essays are also full of complaints about the present state of affairs in science. By the term ‘science’, Haack refers to the natural, human and social sciences in general. The distinction between the natural sciences, on the one hand, and the human and social sciences, on the other, are, however, made significant on several occasions. I will return to this.

<sup>18</sup> Note that in Haack’s argument for value-freedom, the term ‘values’ refers exclusively to ethical and political values, not to values generally (1998: 118-119).

accepts” (op.cit.: 116, 124). A theory may indeed, in the end, turn out to serve “good” feminist “values” – or “democratic” values generally (op.cit.: 113, 119). This fact does, however, not make the theory more or less justified, Haack insists.

### **1.1.2 Feminist epistemology: Democratic epistemology, social epistemology and women’s ways of knowing**

Hence, Haack considers it generally unacceptable that justification of theories is influenced by values – any values. This view is what makes her regard theoretical justification influenced by feminist values, and “democratic” values more generally; “democratic epistemologies”, unacceptable (op.cit.: 113): Haack’s dismissal of feminist epistemology follows from her general critique of value-laden justification of theories. This critique may in turn be linked to her critique of “social” epistemologies, epistemologies that focus *in any way* on “social acceptance” – for example on the social acceptance of certain values – “at the expense of warrant” (op.cit.: 110, 112).

Epistemology should, moreover, not embody “some *specifically* feminist insight” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 119). Feminist epistemology should not only be dismissed because it shares the flaws of all epistemologies that focus on social acceptance at the expense of warrant – for example epistemologies that focus on what serves good, democratic values at the expense of what serves the truth. It should also be dismissed, more “specifically”, because it is based on the indefensible, and in fact undemocratic, idea, that “women’s ways of knowing” give us more valid knowledge than men’s way of knowing (op.cit.: x, 116, 119).

In 1.2 I elaborate Haack’s argument against value-laden justification of theories. This is the basis of her dismissal of feminist epistemology as a democratic epistemology. A critical discussion of this argument is left for Chapter 2. In 1.3 I elaborate Haack’s critique of radical social epistemology, i.e. the basis of her argument against value-laden justification of theories. This critique is assessed in Chapter 3. Finally, in 1.4, I present her critique of feminist epistemologies that assume that women’s ways of knowing are superior. This critique is discussed in Chapter 4.

## 1.2 Defending value-freedom against democratic imperialists

Haack's argument against value-laden justification of theories – whether the values reflect a democratic commitment or totalitarian “Nazi or Soviet” ideologies (op.cit.: 131) – may be reconstructed under six points. 6) is the conclusion she infers from premises 1) to 5):<sup>19</sup>

- 1) The sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true.
- 2) Whether a theory is justified depends, however, only on features indicative of its truth, not its significance.
- 3) A theory is most probably true if it can be demonstrated that it is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence.
- 4) Values express subjective wishes or desires.
- 5) The wish or desire that P provides no evidential support for P.<sup>20</sup>
- 6) Thus, justification of theories cannot refer to values.

In what follows I will develop in more detail the steps in Haack's argument.

### 1.2.1 The sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true

Haack accentuates on several occasions, that the goal of “genuine inquiry” is *not* to produce “trivial”, although perhaps true, quasi-theories (op.cit.: 8, 94), but rather true theories that are “significant” and “illuminating” (1993: 203):

[...] the goal [of inquiry] decomposes into two elements: truth, on the one hand, and interest or importance on the other [...]. Because inquiry has this double goal, appraisal of a person's success in inquiry has two dimensions, which might be roughly characterized as depth and security, the former being interest- and the latter truth-oriented. (Correspondingly, appraisal of a person *qua* inquirer has two dimensions, roughly characterizable as creativity and carefulness) (op.cit.: 199).

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<sup>19</sup> This reconstruction owes much to Elizabeth Anderson's presentation (1995a: 33-34, 56 n. 26). Haack's *Manifesto*, published in 1998, contains essays previously published elsewhere. Anderson's comments, obviously, do not relate to articles published after 1995. Two of the essays in *Manifesto* were, however, published (in an earlier version) already in 1993 and were therefore available to Anderson (1995a: 56, n. 22).

<sup>20</sup> P is a proposition about state of affairs.

This “double goal” of inquiry depends on another distinction; between “how to conduct inquiry” and “how to assess the worth of evidence for a proposition” (1993: 199, 1998: 94):

It is important to distinguish two questions often run together in contemporary epistemology and philosophy of science: how to assess the worth of evidence for a proposition, and: how to conduct inquiry. The former kind of question, though hard enough, is a bit more tractable than the latter. The goal of inquiry is to discover significant, substantial truths; and since there is a certain tension between the two aspects of the goal – it is a lot easier to get truths if you don’t mind the truths you get being trivial – there can be, at best, guidelines, not rules, for the conduct of inquiry. Criteria for appraisal of the worth of evidence, on the other hand, are focused on only one aspect of the goal, on truth-indicativeness (ibid.).

Thus, whereas the task of the inquirer is to construct theories that express “significant, substantial truths” (ibid.), which have both “depth” and “security”, and which are both “interest- and truth-oriented” (1993: 1999), a proposition is justified if it can be argued that it is true, i.e. that it is based on “truth-indicative evidence” (ibid.). True theories which are “boring, trivial, unimportant, [and] not worth the effort of investigating,” consist, then, of justified propositions (1998: 13). However, because of their lack of significance they are quasi-theories, and not theories *proper*: In genuine inquiry we consider not only whether propositions are justified as true or not, but also which truths are “worth the effort of investigating” and why (op.cit.: 13).

Furthermore, considerations of significance require *discretion* in the context of justification – norms for the “conduct of inquiry” are not “rules”, but “guidelines”:

In the narrow sense in which the phrase supposedly refers to a set of rules which can be followed mechanically and which are guaranteed to produce true, or probably true, or progressively more nearly true, or, etc., results, there is no scientific method. No mechanical procedure can avoid the need for discretion – as is revealed by the Popperian shift from: make a bold conjecture, test it as severely as possible, and as soon as counter-evidence is found, abandon it and start again, to: make a bold conjecture, test it as severely as possible, and if counter-evidence is found, don’t give up too easily, but don’t hang on to it too long (1998: 96).

Considerations of significance should not inspire us to alter the criteria of how propositions are justified, but make us approach the criteria more carefully, less mechanically, using good judgment.

### 1.2.2 Whether a theory is justified depends, however, only on features indicative of its truth, not its significance

Haack considers both significant and trivial theories to be sets of propositions having truth-values, i.e. propositions that are candidates for being included in theories, are more or less true or false.<sup>21</sup> Her claim that justification of a theory is a matter of scrutinizing features indicative of the truth of the theory, exclusively, regardless of the significance of the theory, is linked to this idea of what a theory is (i.e. a set of propositions with truth-values).<sup>22</sup> Even though the sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true, the aim of theoretical justification; what is striven for in the context of justification, is finding truth, simply: In the end, significant theories are like trivial quasi-theories in the sense that they are sets of propositions that are justified if the propositions included are backed up by truth-indicative evidence.

How, then, do we distinguish between significant theories and trivial quasi-theories? How do we properly deal with the question of a theory's significance? In Haack's view, the question of a theory's significance should not be dealt with in the context of justification, but rather – as an issue separate from the theory's justification – in the context of discovery and in the context of practical application, where values – such as feminist values – are permitted. Because, what we regard as significant, is an issue of what we value as significant, also from an ethical-political point of view. “The distinguishing feature of genuine inquiry” is the search for something that is of “interest” to us, for “*the truth of some question*”, raised in the contexts of discovery and practical application (original emphasis, op.cit.: 8, 10). And several questions and interests are intertwined with ethical or political concerns. One might for example, like Haack, “care about justice for women” (op.cit.: 119), and frame the research questions accordingly. To do so is perfectly “legitimate” and compatible with the standards of genuine inquiry defended in *Manifesto* (ibid.). What is illegitimate and incompatible with these standards, is making “justice for women” a concern in the process of theoretical justification: “[...] the discovery of sexism in scientific theorizing” does not oblige us “to acknowledge political considerations as legitimate ways to decide between theories” (op.cit.: 127).

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<sup>21</sup> See also 1.2.3 on Haack's gradual notion of truth and justification.

<sup>22</sup> Under the condition of discretion (see 1.2.1): Which propositions to include in and which to exclude from a theory depends also on our good judgment; there is no mechanical procedure.

### **1.2.3 A theory is most probably true if it can be demonstrated that it is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence**

We cannot say that theories are definitely true or completely supported by evidence, however (1993: 203-222). Justifying theories is rather a matter of probability or graduality; “justification is not categorical, but comes in degrees” (op.cit.: 222):

Not all scientific claims are either accepted as definitely true or rejected as definitely false, nor should they be; evidence may be better or worse, warrant stronger or weaker, and the acceptance status of the claim can, and should, vary accordingly (1998: 110).

This is so because both “our theories about the world and ourselves” as well as “our criteria of justification” are fallible (1993: 222):

[...] we can have no proof that our [Haack’s] criteria of justification are truth-guaranteeing, but reasons for thinking that, if any truth-indication is available to us, they are truth-indicative; reasons no less fallible than those parts of our theories about the world and ourselves with which they interlock, but no more so, either (ibid.).

The fallibility of our theories and criteria of justification is due to our “real, imperfect” constitution as human beings (1998: 97):

[...] any actual scientific community consists of real, imperfect human beings, [...] individual idiosyncrasies or weaknesses may [however] compensate for each other. [...] in a community of inquirers, some will be more conservative in temperament, inclined to try adapting an old theory to new evidence, others more radical, readier to look for a new approach. I doubt that real scientists are ever quite single-mindedly devoted to the truth [...]. But to the extent that science is organized so [...] that partisans of one approach seek out the weaknesses which partisans of another are motivated to neglect, a real community of imperfect inquirers can be a tolerable ersatz of an ideal community (op.cit.:97-98).

Real communities of inquirers are always imperfect, although potentially less imperfect than an individual inquirer working on her own without correction from other inquirers. The most we can hope and work for are real communities of inquirers which are organized in ways that make them able to approach what we would consider to be the ideal epistemic community, and so produce theories that are as truth-indicative as possible, even if their truth can never be guaranteed. But even our ideal “hypothetical” notion of an epistemic community, even the best criteria of justification we are able to articulate, are fallible (1993: 214). That is to say: Not only is complete justification of theories faithful to our best criteria of justification impossible; if complete justification of theories was in fact possible, this would not guarantee

that the theories were true, because the best criteria of justification imaginable by real, imperfect, fallible human beings are themselves fallible.

The best criteria of justification imaginable under the condition of fallibilism are what Haack refers to as the “foundherentist”<sup>23</sup> criteria of justification; justification faithful to considerations of “supportiveness”, of “independent security” and of “comprehensiveness” (op.cit.: 73, 87). Genuine inquiry; inquiry where these considerations are taken properly into account, are compared with a crossword puzzle: “The structure of evidence” is regarded

[...] as analogous to a crossword puzzle according to which an empirical proposition is more or less warranted depending on how well it is supported by experiential evidence and background beliefs (analogue: how well a crossword entry is supported by its clue and other completed entries); how secure the relevant background beliefs are, independently of the proposition in question (analogue: how reasonable those other entries are, independent of this one); and how much of the relevant evidence the evidence includes (analogue: how much of the crossword has been completed) (1998: 105-106).<sup>24</sup>

Thus, whether a proposition should be included in a theory or not, depend on how well it is supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence, i.e. on the degree of “its explanatory integration”<sup>25</sup> (ibid.). Evidence, moreover, is “personal rather than impersonal” (1993: 20):

The *explicandum* is: A is more/less justified [...] in believing that p, depending on ... . The choice of *explicandum* [...] indicates [...] that it is a personal locution, not an impersonal locution like ‘the belief that p is justified’ (op.cit.: 73).

Haack defends an “epistemology with a knowing subject” (op.cit.: 97-98); the propositions of theories are more or less warranted for someone.<sup>26</sup> Epistemology is precisely a matter of

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<sup>23</sup> Haack describes foundherentism as the outcome of a critical reconstruction of foundationalism and coherentism. Coherentists subscribe to the thesis that a belief is justified if it belongs to a coherent set of beliefs. Foundationalism is based upon two theses; i) that some justified beliefs are basic; a justified belief is justified not by the support of any other belief, but by the subject’s experience, and ii) that all other justified beliefs are derived; a derived belief is justified via the support, direct or indirect, of a basic belief or beliefs. Foundherentists, like Haack, claim however i) that a subject’s experience is relevant to the justification of empirical beliefs, but that there need be no privileged class of empirical beliefs justified exclusively by the support of experience, independently of the support of other beliefs, and ii) that justification is not exclusively one-directional, but involves pervasive relations of mutual support (1993:10-33).

<sup>24</sup> For a detailed and systematic outline of “the crossword puzzle of inquiry”, see Haack (1993: 81-89).

<sup>25</sup> “[...] by appealing to the notion of explanatory integration in the explication of supportiveness, foundherentism borrows some of the intuitive appeal of the notions of (on the foundationalist side) inference to the best explanation and (on the coherentist side) explanatory coherence” (1993: 84).

<sup>26</sup> The outline of an epistemology with a knowing subject is done in explicit opposition to Karl Popper’s “championship of an epistemology without a knowing subject concerned solely [...] with propositions and their logical relations” (1993: 101).

explicating the best criteria of justification for a community of inquirers. Referring to Charles Sanders Peirce, Haack considers the ideal epistemic community, the community imaginable most likely to produce truth-indicative theories, to be a community where investigations, faithful to the foundherentist criteria of justification, continue indefinitely. Peirce characterizes truth as

[...] the ultimate representation, the Final Opinion, compatible with all possible experiential evidence and the fullest logical scrutiny, which would be agreed by all who investigate were inquiry to continue indefinitely (1998: 162).

Or as Peirce himself puts it: Truth is “the opinion that would be ultimately agreed by all who investigate”, as “that concordance of an abstract statement with the ideal limit towards which endless investigation would tend to bring scientific belief” (quoted in op.cit.: 166, n. 25). Peirce did not defend an anti-realist, purely “conversational”<sup>27</sup> consensus theory of truth and justification, however. If he had, Haack could not have made him an ally: Anti-realism is incompatible with foundherentism, constructed not to be vulnerable to what she refers to as “the drunken sailor’s argument” so “fatal to coherentism” (1993: 27):

The fundamental objection is this: that because coherentism allows no non-belief input – no role to experience or the world – it cannot be satisfactory; that unless it is acknowledged that the justification of an empirical belief requires such input, it could not be supposed that a belief’s being justified could be an indication of its truth, of its correctly representing how the world is (ibid.).

With Peirce, Haack considers “the real” both as independent of what “you or I or anybody” thinks it to be (1998: 163) – there is a “world” from which we can get “non-belief input” (1993: 27) – and as what is “ultimately” represented in “the Final Opinion” of the ideal community of inquirers (1998: 162). There are two presuppositions for this “reconciliation” (op.cit.: 163). One is the interpretation of reality as something within the reach of “possible cognition” (ibid.). Haack regards talk about “absolutely incognizable” reality as “pragmatically meaningless”: “it is impossible to make sense of any question to which we could not, however long the inquiry continued, determine the answer” (ibid.). This peculiar “repudiation of a world of unknowable things-in-themselves” is also defended by Peirce. Haack quotes Peirce saying:

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<sup>27</sup> Haack dismisses Rorty’s “vulgar pragmatist” conception of justification as “conversation” (1993: 182-202).



[...] the highest concept which can be reached by abstractions from judgments of experience – and therefore, the highest concept which can be reached at all – is the concept of something of the nature of a cognition [...] *Not*, then, [...] is a concept of the cognizable. Hence, not-cognizable [...] is, at least, self-contradictory [...]. In short, *cognizability* (in its widest sense) and *being* are not merely metaphysically the same, but are synonymous terms (original emphasis, quoted in *ibid.*).

It is this move, the equation between being and cognizability, between the world and the world-for-us, that enables Peirce (and Haack) “to avoid the hopeless obsession with the skeptical challenge to which more rigid realisms seem drawn” (*op.cit.*: 164).

The second presupposition for the reconciliation of the real and the Final Opinion is that non-belief input from the world, entering the human mind through perception, is considered epistemologically relevant. Our capacity to perceive and to let our beliefs be informed by what we perceive, i.e. by our sense experiences, is regarded as a cognitively significant capacity – we may be able to know better, to construct theories that are better justified, because of it. This is to allow for causal relations in justification, and a moderate naturalism in epistemology, since human perception is a process that can be studied empirically and elaborated causally.<sup>28</sup> However, this does not allow for epistemology to be completely naturalized; to say “that traditional epistemological problems [...] are illegitimate [problems], and should be replaced by new natural-scientific projects” (1993: 4). Justification should, rather, be considered an “interplay of causal and evaluative aspects” (*op.cit.*: 73). It involves, unavoidably, “normative” considerations (1998: 108): Sense experiences are epistemologically relevant in the sense that they are made epistemologically relevant by inquirers who let their investigations be directed by the best criteria of justification available (i.e. the truth-indicative criteria of foundherentism).

This notion of justification highlights, moreover, the intimate connection between perception and conceptualization in inquiry. The fact that “our perceptual judgments are conceptualized, interpretative” should, however, Haack notes, not allow us to forget that “in perception we are in contact with something real, independent of our interpretations, of how anybody thinks it to be”: Perception involves “a potential for surprise” (1998: 161-162). We cannot conceptualize reality – which is what we try to do when we pursue genuine inquiry – without

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<sup>28</sup> Again, this point is directed especially against Karl Popper’s account that considers “only relations of deductive logic” as “epistemologically relevant” (1993: 101): Causal relations, and thus “scientists’ perceptual experiences”, can play no role in justification, according to Popper (*op.cit.*: 99).

*conceptualizing*. Nor do attempts to conceptualize reality make sense if they are not in fact attempts to conceptualize (cognizable) *reality*. There are many ways of conceptualizing the surprises of our encounters with the real: “There are many different vocabularies, and many different true descriptions of the world” (op.cit.: 157). Haack even stresses “that cognitive advance is not always a matter of new claims in an old vocabulary, but often a matter of conceptual innovations marked by new vocabulary, or by shifts in the meaning of old vocabulary” (op.cit.: 160). She insists, however, that

[...] if there is complete failure of translatability [between descriptions], there is compatibility. If, on the other hand, there is translatability, there may be compatibility or incompatibility. If the different descriptions are incompatible, they cannot both be true [...]. But if the different descriptions are compatible [...] the different true descriptions can be conjoined in a single (even if heterogeneous) true description (op.cit.: 161).

Thus, there is no “real incommensurability” (op.cit.: 96). Propositions of different vocabularies, however, can in the end be judged compatible or incompatible with other propositions: A proposition in any language whatsoever is warranted if it contributes sufficiently to the explanatory integration of a theory. Any proposed theory, however conceptualized, is justified if it is supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence. The foundherentist criteria of justification are considered generally valid, i.e. as the proper standard of epistemological assessment of propositions of all vocabularies. Hence, with her construction of the crossword puzzle model of inquiry, Haack denies notions of “deep”, “normative or philosophical” “epistemic” and “ontological” relativism (op.cit.: 148).<sup>29</sup> For example is the problem with Richard Rorty’s notion of justification as conversation, both its anti-realist presuppositions, and its “relativist and cynical”, “contextualist + conventionalist” approach to epistemology (1993: 193).<sup>30</sup> The foundherentist

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<sup>29</sup> Haack mentions also “normative or philosophical” “moral” and “aesthetic” relativism, but she does not address these relativisms (1998: 148). In her analysis of epistemic and ontological relativism, she introduces a set of finer distinctions: Both “epistemic value”, “meaning”, “reference”, “truth”, “metaphysical commitment”, “ontology” and “reality” have been presented – by different people – as being relative to “culture or community”, “language”, “conceptual scheme”, “theory”, “scientific paradigm”, “version, depiction, description” – or even to the “individual” (“subjectivism”) (op.cit.: 149-166). The deep, normative or philosophical relativism – which in Haack’s view is false – is positioned in opposition to “shallow”, “descriptive or anthropological” relativism “to the effect that different communities or cultures accept different epistemic (moral, or aesthetic) values” – which might be true, but which is philosophically uninteresting (op.cit.: 151).

<sup>30</sup> Haack notes, however, that Rorty has lately defended “tribalism + conventionalism”, and not really “contextualism + conventionalism”. Tribalism is not relativist, because it claims that “A is justified in believing that p if A satisfies the criteria of *our* epistemic community”; it is an ethnocentrist position. The tribalist move however does “not get him [Rorty] off the hook [...]”. Tribalism is entirely arbitrary and unmotivated unless one thinks that the criteria of one’s own epistemic community are better than those of other communities; that is, it

criteria of justification are considered, rather, to be the best standard of warrant available *in any context* (under the condition of fallibilism), because they are the standard most likely to produce theories that are truth-indicative.

The question is why truth is so important. Why should justified theories indicate truth? Why not prescribe justified beliefs as the aim of inquiry, without presupposing that justified beliefs are (most probably) true? Rorty states that “it makes no difference in practice whether you aim at the truth, or aim at justified belief” (1998b: 20). Haack maintains, however, that “to believe that p is to accept p as true” (1993: 192); “truth is the internal goal of belief” (1998: 16). She does not consider this to be “a sophisticated remark about truth” (1993: 192). It is rather a “truism about belief” (ibid.). It is “a tautology” to argue that inquiry, where we scrutinize our beliefs, aims at the truth (1998: 189): “If you aren’t trying to find out the truth about whatever-it-is, you aren’t really inquiring” (ibid.). But why bother really inquiring? Why seriously believe anything? Why “engage fully – non-cynically” in genuine investigations (1993: 192)? What is so upsetting about the “fake” and “sham” reasoning of pseudo-inquiry, i.e. with being either indifferent to the truth-value of a proposition for which one seeks to make a case (fake reasoning), or not wanting to discover the truth of some question, but to make the case for some proposition to which one has a “prior and unbudgeable commitment” (sham reasoning) (1998: 9)? Generally, because non-cynical inquiry is instrumentally valuable in a very crucial sense: Haack is convinced that genuine truth-seeking serves the survival of the human species (op.cit.: 13-14).<sup>31</sup> In addition, genuine inquirers are morally virtuous: To avoid fake and sham reasoning is a matter of being a “decent”<sup>32</sup> academic and a “good”<sup>33</sup> person.

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pulls *against* conventionalism, to which, however, Rorty is unambiguously committed” (original emphasis, 1993: 192-193).

<sup>31</sup> “Compared with other animals, we humans are not especially fleet or strong; our forte is a capacity to figure things out, and hence to anticipate and avoid danger. Granted, this is by no means an unmixed blessing; as shrewd old Thomas Hobbes put it long ago, the same capacity that enables men, unlike brutes, to engage in ratiocination, also enables men, unlike brutes, ‘to multiply one untruth by another’ [...]. But who could doubt that our capacity to reason – imperfect as it is, and easily abused – is of instrumental value to us humans?” (1998: 13-14).

<sup>32</sup> “It seems almost indecent when an academic whose job is to inquire, denies the intelligibility or denigrates the desirability of the ideal of honest inquiry” (1998: 14). The indecency stems not from the often harmful consequences of what Haack refers to as over-belief (believing beyond what one’s evidence warrants) or under-belief (not believing when one’s evidence warrants belief) as such, but rather from the fact that the inquirer can be held *responsible* for these consequences: It is because the damage “results from self-deception, from a lack of intellectual integrity, that it is morally culpable” (op.cit.: 15).

<sup>33</sup> “To be sure, intellectual integrity is not sufficient by itself, any more than courage is, or kindness, to make you a good person [...]. And, yes, you might be in other respects a decent person [...], while lacking in intellectual honesty. But, to my ear at least, ‘he is a good man but intellectually dishonest’, if not an oxymoron, really does not need an ‘otherwise’” (1998: 15).

## 1.2.4 Values express subjective wishes or desires

As observed by Elizabeth Anderson, Haack conceptualizes ethical-political considerations as subjective and “arbitrary” judgments; as expressing “idle wishes or desires” (1995a: 35). Indicative is Haack’s presentation of the “tacit oath” that we presume on the part of “those who follow any scientific vocation, [...] never to subordinate the objective truth-seeking to any *subjective preference or inclination or any expediency or opportunistic consideration*” (my emphasis, Haack 1998: 7). To disregard this oath of objective truth-seeking is considered equivalent to allowing justification of theories to be value-laden, which in turn is to subordinate objective truth-seeking to individual preferences, random inclinations and opportunistic considerations, because values are nothing but subjective wishes or desires.

Accordingly, value-oriented action is simply the instrumentally oriented actor’s attempt to fulfill her wishes or desires as efficiently as possible. Haack embeds her idea of what it means to orient oneself with reference to values, in a rational-choice theory of action, where actions are conceived as motivated by desires, and explained with reference to the actor’s strategic means-end calculations given her beliefs and desires. Thus, in principle, our desires can be of any kind – they are presented precisely as arbitrary, random and unpredictable. In general, however, “human nature being what it is”, our desires are of a selfish kind. Indicative is Haack’s recommendation to reward the “egos” that choose to pursue the truth (op.cit.: 12): “All the same, human nature being what it is, people *do* mind who gets the credit; so putting ego in the service of creativity and respect for evidence is no bad thing” (original emphasis, *ibid.*). To reward the ego means, typically, to secure the advancement of individual “utility” or “ambition”, “fame or fortune” (op.cit: 8-9). Hence, desires and their ethical and political expressions, reflect arbitrary subjective preferences or inclinations, but are only arbitrary within the natural motivational horizon of human beings which is egoism.

Moreover, as the term desire indicates, Haack assumes that our values express our emotional states. When an inquirer lets her values influence justification of theories, she gives in to what she is “temperamentally disposed to” (op.cit.: 10),<sup>34</sup> to what she finds “emotionally

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<sup>34</sup> The expression is taken from a passage on the “impartial” and “genuine” inquirer not being “motivated by the desire to arrive at a certain conclusion”, in opposition to the “intellectually dishonest person” who “is given to

appealing” to the extent that it is “befogging” her (op.cit.: 113).<sup>35</sup> The fact that our subscription to values has an emotional basis, does not imply, however, that the inquirer, giving in to her emotions, avoids individual responsibility. If she allows values to influence justification of theories, she is not in a position to blame her sentimental constitution, because she could have resisted her inclinations and decided to pursue genuine inquiry: The hazards of value interference are “something for which you can be held responsible” (op.cit.: 15).

In addition to this elaboration of values as expressions of subjective wishes or desires, the essays of *Manifesto* also contain drafts of a conception of values as virtues and of values as justified moral standards, partly in accordance with, partly modifying premise 4):

### **i) Values as virtues**

Haack distinguishes between “epistemological virtues”; “dispositions” that are epistemologically valuable, “instrumental virtues”; dispositions that are instrumentally valuable, and “moral virtues”; dispositions that are morally valuable (op.cit.: 7-21). The typology is introduced in her discussion of “intellectual integrity” as “a disposition to honesty in inquiry: to do your best to extend your evidential reach, to scrutinize your evidence with care and patience, to stretch your imaginative powers” (op.cit.: 13). Intellectual integrity is an epistemological virtue, because it advances genuine inquiry, not the fake and sham reasoning of pseudo-inquiry. It is an instrumental virtue because the genuine inquiry it advances serves the survival of the human species; it is valuable from an evolutionary perspective. And it is a moral virtue because it makes you a “decent” academic and a “good” person, i.e. it is a value-laden virtue (op.cit.: 14, 15).

Haack’s notion of virtues is related, however, to her notion of values as subjective wishes or desires. The virtue of intellectual integrity is introduced as a disposition to which you have to be “motivated”, the outcome of a “desire”, something you are “ready for” or “inclined to” (op.cit.: 11). And, just as value commitments that lead you astray from genuine inquiry are ones for which you can be blamed, to choose in favor of intellectual integrity is something for

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deceiving himself about where evidence points, temperamentally disposed to wishful and fearful thinking” (1998: 10-11).

<sup>35</sup> The expression is taken from the following passage: “Democracy is a political value, and would be apropos if theory-choice in science were a matter of ‘social negotiation’ pure and simple. But it isn’t; it is a matter of seeking out, checking, and assessing the worth of evidence. Unless you are befogged by the emotional appeal of the word ‘democratic’, it is clear the idea is ludicrous [...]” (1998: 113).

which you can be held “responsible” (op.cit.: 15): To be a virtuous inquirer is an individual achievement for which you deserve “honor” and “praise” (ibid.).<sup>36</sup>

Virtues such as intellectual integrity, honesty in inquiry, “creativity” and “carefulness” (op.cit.: 97, 1993: 199), are, however, different from other value-laden wishes or desires in one crucial respect: Justification of theories directed by (some of)<sup>37</sup> these virtues does in fact advance genuine inquiry even if they are value-laden (i.e. even if they are also moral virtues).

## ii) Values as justified moral standards

Haack’s notion of genuine inquiry rests fundamentally on the premise that there are epistemological standards that are more or less warranted. Truth is even given a universal status as the most prominent of epistemological standards. The universal and superior epistemological status of truth is irrefutable:<sup>38</sup> “Terms of epistemic appraisal, unlike moral oughts, carry no presupposition of voluntariness”, because the “internal connection between the concepts of beliefs and truth” implies that you cannot simply “believe at will” if believe is what you do – if you believe that p, you believe that p is true (1998: 18). This is not to deny that some inquirers disregard at will evidence and philosophical argument and give in to subjective inclinations, for instance ethical sympathies or political interests, which thus lead them astray; the wishful and fearful thinking of sham reasoning is a problem “precisely because the will *can* get in the way of our judgment of evidence” (original emphasis, ibid.). Oughts do, however, carry a presupposition of voluntariness. Questions about “good” and “bad” express our subjective, and most often selfish, wishes or desires, which we choose to pursue – or not pursue (op.cit.: 119). Nevertheless, there are standards, “moral” standards that are more justified than others (op.cit.: 14, 167); standards we should decide in favor of, and bring our motives in accordance with. However, in contradistinction to the epistemological standard of truth, Haack’s moral standards are neither explicated, analyzed, nor thoroughly justified. Apart from some general reflections connecting the requirement of “justice” to a recognition of our “common humanity”, Haack is silent on the topic of moral justification (op.cit.: 123). And, most important for her argument for value-freedom: Not even justified moral standards are allowed to play a role in theoretical justification: “Politicization of

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<sup>36</sup> Although Haack admits that the disposition towards intellectual integrity also depends on “an environment that encourages it” (1998: 11).

<sup>37</sup> Creativity is, for example, a virtue only *outside* the context of justification (“creativity in hypothesis”), whereas carefulness is a virtue *of* theoretical justification (“care in seeking out and assessing the worth of evidence” (1998: 97).

<sup>38</sup> Although under the condition of fallibility.

inquiry” is indefensible in the interest of any values, i.e. also values that can be given the status of warranted moral standards (op.cit.: 119).

Haack is somewhat ambivalent on this point, however. On one occasion she emphasizes that “freedom of thought and information is vital to the scientific enterprise” (op.cit.: 97): “Freedom of thought and speech” are “important conditions for scientific inquiry to flourish” (op.cit.: 113). On another occasion she expresses concern for “the possibility that inquiry by a madman bent on destroying the planet might succeed – and bring further inquiry to an end” (op.cit.: 13). These passages suggest that there are standards that have to be respected if inquiry is to take place at all. If inquiry was pursued as though destroying the planet and freedom of thought and information did not matter, if inquirers when justifying theories disregarded the standards that are conditions for scientific activity to flourish, there would be a risk that inquiry itself would contribute to ruining the prerequisites for continued inquiry. But this concern does not prompt Haack to modify her general defense of value-freedom.

In any case, Haack’s reluctance to destroy the planet and to disregard freedom of thought and speech, together with her general dismissal of “morally objectionable ends” (op.cit.: 14), as well as her considerations on justice as a “moral issue” (op.cit.: 167), exemplify a distinction that seems to be assumed in *Manifesto*, between moral standards which, in Haack’s view, are justified because they respect our common humanity, and other preferences and inclinations that people might give in to.

The distinction plays a role, it seems, in the context of discovery and in the context of practical application, if not in the context of justification. In the context of practical application there is a set of morally objectionable ends that should not be pursued. Apart from avoiding “destroy[ing] the planet”, Haack links the morally objectionable to illegality, as when “the crook [is] paid to find out where the sewer runs so the gang can get into the vault” (op.cit.: 14). A third example of inquiry for morally objectionable ends, is inquiry in the service of totalitarian regimes. This was exactly “the disaster of Nazi or Soviet science” (op.cit.: 131). Finally, there are moral issues of justice – for example of gender justice – connected with the “application of scientific discoveries” (op.cit.: 119).

In the context of discovery there are legitimate moral issues of “justice and opportunity” (op.cit.: 123). Freedom of thought and speech for all discoverers is obviously an essential

moral concern. Haack suspects in fact “that some who favor democratic epistemology have confused the concept of democracy with the concept of freedom of thought” (op.cit.: 113). The subtext of this passage seems to be that democracy might be a “good” value with a clear “emotional appeal” (ibid.), but that it does not have the superior moral status of the commitment to free thought and speech. On other occasions, however, democracy among discoverers is conceptualized as right and just – not simply as emotionally appealing:

But perhaps, when it is said that science ought to be ‘more democratic’, the point intended is only that no one should be excluded from a scientific career on the basis of irrelevant considerations such as race, sex, or eye color. This seems right, [...] morally (it *is* a bad thing if, for irrelevant reasons, people are excluded or discouraged from work for which they have talent) (op.cit.: 114).

This link between justice in inquiry and equality of opportunity in the context of discovery is considered, however, to be more “meritocratic than democratic in its thrust” (ibid.). Hence, Haack seems to be uncomfortable with including the term democracy in normative discussions on epistemology, even when restricted to a discussion on recruitment in the context of discovery, because it contributes in a slippery-slope-like manner to the idea that “theory-choice” should somehow be “put to a vote”, when in fact “seeking out, checking, and assessing the worth of evidence” adequately, in science especially, ought to be done by the talented and properly qualified, with the “appropriate expertise” and competence, respecting “the institutionalized authority of well-warranted results” produced by “earlier generations” (op.cit.: 113, 114). This is the main reason why “a systematic underevaluation of women’s abilities” in academia is a problem (op.cit.: 172) – not because “appointing women contributes to a desirable diversity”, not because women are needed as role models, not because women bring special insights (op.cit. 169) – not even primarily because it is unjust and equality of opportunity is a moral standard that recognizes our common humanity – but rather because finding “the best person appointed despite her sex” will facilitate genuine inquiry, and sexism, possibly excluding a talented woman because she is a woman, will not (op.cit.: 172).

Haack doubts, however, that sexism is a significant problem in academia (ibid.). The greatest obstacles to “genuine meritocracy” in present day academia, are not sexism (or racism), but rather the “disgracefully corrupt” hiring process driven more by “greed and fear” than by “the wish to identify the best candidate”, and what Haack refers to as “preposterism”; the mistaken belief that the “explosion of publications represents a significant contribution to knowledge”



(ibid.: 176, 177, 179, 192). And, as far as sexism in fact *is* a problem, Haack insists that we should stick to “procedural-fairness policies” (op.cit.: 169); “rules ensuring formal, procedural equality – “equal-opportunity” or “antidiscrimination” policies (op.cit.: 170), because affirmative action; “preferential hiring policies” (op.cit.: 169), are unfair and inefficient. Again, however, what is more important to Haack is not the moral concern that antidiscrimination is just, and that preferential hiring policies might discriminate (white) talented men illegitimately (op.cit.: 179),<sup>39</sup> but rather that such policies are inefficient as means of having the most talented applicant appointed, and so will not inspire genuine inquiry.<sup>40</sup>

### **1.2.5 The wish or desire that P provides no evidential support for P**

Values, as expressions of subjective wishes or desires, must be excluded from the context of justification, according to Haack, because including them is to claim that “propositions about what states of affairs are *desirable* or *deplorable* could be evidence that things *are*, or *are not*, so” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 129). To allow for value-laden justification, is to allow for the wishful and fearful thinking of pseudo-inquiry; of sham reasoning, and hence to betray the honorable ideal of “impartial” investigation which prescribes inquiry that is “not motivated by the desire to arrive at a certain conclusion” (op.cit.: 10). Sham reasoning, and the inherently biased theorizing that is its outcome, is sham, essentially, because it is based on an invalid logical inference, according to Haack: It is based on the idea that “*it is possible to derive an ‘is’ from an ‘ought’*” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 129). This “rubbing out” of the “distinction of descriptive versus normative” is, however, “untenable” (op.cit.: 129). P is warranted if it is supported by evidence, not because we think P ought to be the case, because we wish or desire, or value, P.

### **1.2.6 Thus, justification of theories cannot refer to values**

The conclusion 6) inferred from premises 1) to 5), is a conclusion one ought to accept, Haack argues, if one accepts the premises: If 1) to 5) are valid, then values cannot influence justification of theories. It follows from this argument that justification of theories cannot

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<sup>39</sup> “Am I saying, I am sometimes asked, that what bothers me is the unfairness to the better but unsuccessful candidate? This seems to me too crude a way of looking at it” (1998: 179).

<sup>40</sup> Such policies might ensure that we get more mediocre women replacing mediocre men in academia, but not that we recruit the “genuinely talented” (1998: 179).

refer to *feminist* values. One cannot accept without contradiction Haack's argument for value-freedom, and at the same allow feminist ethical-political considerations to influence theoretical justification.

### 1.3 Countering radical interpretations of “science as social”<sup>41</sup>

Haack presents one moderate prescription for a sociological approach to inquiry; the “good, sober sociology of science”, and three radical prescriptions which, in one way or another, focus on “social acceptance at the expense of warrant” (op.cit.: 99, 110). One of the radical prescriptions spurs us to “*play down* warrant and [...] accentuate acceptance” (my emphasis, *ibid.*); another (more) radical prescription is to “*ignore* warrant altogether” and to “acknowledge only acceptance” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 112); and a third (even more) radical prescription is to *replace* “the concept of warrant by an ersatz of a purely politicosociological character” (op.cit.: 113), i.e. the approach of the defenders of value-laden justification of theories, such as feminist and other democratic epistemologists.<sup>42</sup> Hence, these radical prescriptions all conflict with premises 1), 2) and 3) above. They imply that social acceptance and not (only) significant truth is the aim of theoretical inquiry (thus denying 1), and that whether a theory is justified depends on social acceptance and not (only) on features indicative of its truth (denying 2). Moreover, they imply that one shows that a theory is most probably true – if indeed this is considered something one should try to show – by demonstrating that it is socially accepted, not (only) that it is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence (denying 3). The third and most radical prescription, defended by proponents of value-laden theoretical justification and democratic epistemologies, also contradicts premises 4),<sup>43</sup> 5) and 6) above: Not only are inquiry (1),

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<sup>41</sup> Haack (1998: 115). Consider again that Haack dismisses an exceptionalist approach to science. Her dismissal of radical interpretations of ‘science as social’ should therefore be understood as a dismissal of radical sociological approaches to inquiry as such.

<sup>42</sup> Haack's distinction between moderate (i.e. the subtitle of *Manifesto*) and radical, refers to how far one departs from the Old Deferentialist picture of “the logic of science”; whether one prescribes to moderate or more or less radical transformations of this picture (1998: 105, 106). The distinction is not meant to suggest that moderates are necessarily politically moderate, or that radicals are necessarily politically radical. The distinction is also not meant to suggest that the moderates demand only moderate changes in how contemporary science is organized, or that the radicals demand radical changes. The moderate Haack considers herself, at least occasionally, to be politically more radical than the radicals – for example when she criticizes “the new-fangled feminist ideas of women's ways of knowing” to reproduce “sexist stereotypes” (op.cit.: x). She is also extremely critical of the pseudo-inquiry and the unmeritocratic recruitment practices of contemporary science.

<sup>43</sup> Or at least proceeds as if premise 4 was not the case. Haack seems generally to assume that critics of doctrines of value-freedom share her understanding of values as subjective wishes or desires, even though they, in her view, do not recognize the implications of this understanding properly when prescribing epistemology (if they

theoretical justification (2) and truth-seeking (3) made into “matter[s] of social negotiation” (ibid.). In addition, the set of values preferred by the pseudo-inquirers – for example the democratic values of feminist pseudo-inquirers – are prescribed a privileged epistemological role in these negotiations.

This additional, normative move of those who subscribe to the most radical prescription, relies, thus, either on the least radical sociological approach to inquiry, making inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking *partly* a matter of social negotiation, or on the more radical approach, making inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking *wholly* a matter of social negotiation. Accordingly, any suggestion of a feminist epistemology would be mistaken if the presupposition that inquiry is more or less a matter of social negotiation, is also mistaken: If the context of justification cannot be reduced to a context of social negotiation, it goes without saying that it cannot be reduced to a context of social negotiation where feminist or other values might play a privileged epistemological role. And, this is precisely what Haack argues: The context of justification cannot be reduced to a context of social negotiation. The radicals have not and will not succeed in their endeavor.

### **1.3.1 Inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking – wholly a matter of social negotiation?**

Haack argues that it is “doubly false” to claim that “scientific knowledge is nothing more than the product of processes of social negotiation” (op.cit.: 112). The claim disregards the fact that theoretical justification is a matter of assessing the truth-indicativeness of evidence, and that science as we know it has “succeeded extraordinarily well, by and large” in doing so adequately (op.cit.: 98). It also rests on what she refers to as “the passes for fallacy”; it accentuates “what at a given time *passes for* scientific knowledge over warrant”, confuses “what we *take as* confirmation with what really confirms a hypothesis” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 117), and so completely ignores the crucial distinction between warrant and acceptance:

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had, they would have defended a doctrine of value-freedom similar to her own). In some passages, Haack suggests, however, that her difference with the democratic epistemologists might also be a matter of different approaches to what values are: “I began to wonder if the problem might be that to engage in philosophical argument about moral issues puts one in chronic danger of falling into sham reasoning” (1998: 167). Haack recognizes, then, that there is a debate going on in moral philosophy about values, and thus, that her opponents might not share her understanding of values as subjective wishes and desires after all (even if they are wrong in not doing so, and even if philosophical arguments about values often end up in sham reasoning).

[...] not everything that has thus far survived those processes (of seeking out, checking, and assessing the weight of evidence) is knowledge; what survives those processes is what *counts as* knowledge, what is *accepted as* knowledge – but not all of it *is*, necessarily, knowledge. Some may, despite surviving those processes, not be warranted; some may turn out to be false (original emphasis, *ibid.*: 112).

This argument relies partly on the presupposition of fallibilism. Even our best theories about the world and ourselves, as well as our best criteria of justification are fallible in principle: What is accepted as the Final Opinion indicates truth, but does not guarantee it. To uphold the distinction between acceptance and warrant is even more significant if we know – as we do – that existing scientific communities tend to be haunted by sham and fake reasoning: Their opinions are nowhere near Final. There is no reason to consider the conclusions accepted after pseudo-inquiry as warranted.

Hence, Haack maintains premise 1), 2) and 3) in her argument for value-freedom: Inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking are not wholly a matter of social negotiation. By maintaining this, she does, however, not deny that: “Scientific theories are devised, articulated, developed, by scientists; theoretical concepts like *electron*, *gene*, *force*, and so forth, are, if you like, their construction” (original emphasis, *op.cit.*: 113). She also does not deny that “objects of sociological theories [...] social institutions (marriage, say, or banking) and social categories (gender, say, as distinct from sex) are, in a sense, socially constructed; if there weren’t human societies, there would be no such things” (*ibid.*). These are two examples often referred to by those who try to deconstruct the distinction between warrant and social acceptance. Haack insists, however, that neither electrons, genes nor forces nor the objects of sociological theories “are made real by scientists’ theorizing” (*op.cit.*: 113). This made-real-approach ignores the causal aspect of justification; the epistemological significance of perception of reality. Foundherentism requires that our descriptions, concepts and theories relate adequately to relevant non-belief input from the real (social and natural) world.

### **1.3.2 Inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking – partly a matter of social negotiation?**

Those who describe inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking partly as an issue of social acceptance, rely, according to Haack, on the presupposition that social evaluations,

interests and structures are “inseparable from scientific inquiry”; they “insist on the underdetermination of theory by evidence and the inextricability of non-evidential factors in theory-choice” (op.cit.: 110).<sup>44</sup> Haack presents different interpretations of this presupposition, refuting them all as she goes along.

The first interpretation tells us that social evaluations and interests are inseparable from scientific inquiry because “evidence never obliges us to accept this claim rather than that, and we have to accept something, so acceptance is always affected by something besides the evidence” (op.cit.: 110). This “something besides the evidence” that affects acceptance is assumed to be social evaluations or interests of some kind. Haack admits that we often accept claims that are possibly false. However, this is not necessarily a problem:

Not all scientific claims are either accepted as definitely true or rejected as definitely false, nor should they be; evidence may be better or worse, warrant stronger or weaker, and the acceptance status of a claim can, and should, vary accordingly (ibid.).

Justification is gradual and fallible. We talk about better or worse, stronger or weaker, and we might be wrong. If evidence is worse and the warrant is weaker, we have the choice to simply reject the claim, as scientists often do: “[...] we *don’t* have to accept something; if the evidence is inadequate, why not just acknowledge that we don’t know?” (original emphasis, ibid.).

The second interpretation presents the underdetermination thesis somewhat differently:

The point [...] is not that, in practice, we don’t always have enough evidence to decide whether a theory is true, but that, in principle, even all possible evidence is insufficient to decide, that there is always an incompatible, but empirically equivalent theory (op.cit.: 110).

According to this underdetermination-in-principle argument, “no amount of observational evidence could enable us to tell whether p1 or empirically-equivalent-but-incompatible p2 is true” (op.cit.: 110, 111). Again, under the condition of fallibilism we can never deem p1 or p2 to be definitely true. But one of the propositions might still be more warranted than the other. If this is not the case, if we cannot say that p1 is more warranted than p2 or the other way around, “the most we could learn from inquiry is that either p1 or p2” (my emphasis, op.cit.:

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<sup>44</sup> And refer in this connection often to Quine’s underdetermination thesis. Among feminist epistemologists making this move, Haack mentions Lynn Hankinson Nelson and Helen Longino (op.cit.: 121, n. 23).

111). We have no reason to infer from this fact that something other than evidence, such as social evaluations or interests, should decide whether we opt for p1 or p2.

The third interpretation tells us, however, that this is not a viable solution, because “we have to act, and so we have to accept some theory as the basis on which to act” (op.cit.: 111). But Haack does not consider this a problem: “We often decide to act *as if* a theory is true. From this it does not follow that we have to commit ourselves to the truth of the theory” (ibid.).<sup>45</sup>

Haack maintains thus premises 1), 2) and 3) in her argument for value-freedom. Whether a theory is justified depends on its truth-indicativeness (2). This is not even partly an issue of social negotiation. Whether a theory indicates truth depends exclusively on whether it is supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence (3). Whether the theory is socially acceptable or not is irrelevant. And inquiry as such should not, at least not unconditionally, be conceptualized as partly a matter of social negotiation. The context of discovery and the context of practical application allow for social negotiation, but the context of justification does not. This is to maintain that to end up with theories that are significantly true is the sole aim of inquiry (1), without which genuine inquiry will degenerate into pseudo-inquiry.

### **1.3.3 The good, sober sociology of science**

Haack recommends instead a moderate interpretation of science as social that does not conflict with 1), 2) and 3) above. This interpretation does not consider the context of justification partly or wholly as equivalent with a context of social negotiation, although it admits that justification takes place in a community of inquirers. Indeed, Haack considers with Peirce the Final Opinion not as “the ultimate representation” produced by an ideal individual knower, but by an ideal knowledge community (op.cit.: 162). To organize inquiry as a social enterprise in this sense, to institutionalize inquiry as an “engagement, cooperative and competitive, of many persons, within and across generations” will not undermine its potential for “epistemological distinction”, but rather contribute to it (op.cit.: 107). For one

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<sup>45</sup> In such cases “it is wise to take whatever precautions feasible”, if the theory turns out in fact to be false (1998: 111).

thing, the fact that there is a cooperative community of inquirers “help[s] to compensate for individuals’ weaknesses and idiosyncrasies” (ibid.):

I doubt that criteria of better and worse evidence will yield a linear ordering, and I am sure that no mechanical decision-procedure for theory-choice is to be anticipated. But a community of inquirers will usually, and usefully, include some who are quick to start speculating towards a new theory when the evidence begins to disfavor the old one, and others who are more inclined patiently to try to modify the old. And though real, imperfect inquirers are seldom, if ever, altogether free of prejudice and partisanship, a community of inquirers will usually, and usefully, include partisans of one approach keen to seek out and expose the weaknesses which partisans of a rival approach are motivated to neglect (op.cit.: 107-108).

Genuine inquiry is further facilitated by division of labor: Subcommunities of the scientific community should work on different problems, and members of the different subcommunities on different parts of “their” problems: “It is as if different subgroups, and different persons within them, worked on different parts of a crossword puzzle” (op.cit.: 107). The benefits of specialization are cognitive advance, if the inquirers specialize on the basis of talent and merit, and if “each individual and each subgroup has access, as needed, to the work of others”, making it possible to check “the consistency of their entries with other, distant but still obliquely interconnected, areas of the puzzle” (ibid.). Finally, the competitive character of genuine inquiry ought to be appreciated: “competition between partisans of rival approaches or theories, and [...] between rival or research teams hoping to be the first to solve this or that problem” (ibid.: 108), will contribute making the cognitive outcome optimal.<sup>46</sup>

That is: To recognize that the better scrutiny of evidence takes place in a community of virtuous inquirers where “the internal organization [...] and the external environment” spur the proper mixture of “cooperation and competition”, is not to focus on social acceptance at the expense of warrant (op.cit.: 108). It is rather a matter of appreciating a decisive condition for the “more or less and by and large and in the long run” appropriate correlation between “the descriptive notion of acceptance” and “the normative notion of warrant” (my emphasis, ibid.). It is the task of the good, sober sociology of science to trace empirically how the internal organization and the external environment of science contribute to successful inquiry (that is, when the well-warranted and the accepted correlate), but also how the internal organization and the external environment of science might “hamper progress, [...]

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<sup>46</sup> In accordance with Haack’s rational-choice theory of action, where the actors typically strive for “utility”, “fame or fortune” (1998: 8, 9).

discourage good, honest, thorough, scrupulous inquiry, [and] [...] encourage fraud and fakery or pointless busywork” (ibid.); when the accepted is not the well-warranted, or the truths revealed are not significant.

## 1.4 Escaping women’s standpoint

Hence, Haack concludes that theoretical justification cannot refer to values (6), through an argument based on premises 1) to 5), all considered to be valid premises that ought to be maintained in the interest of genuine inquiry, despite attacks on 1), 2) and 3) from the defenders of a radical sociology of inquiry – because these attacks are all essentially mistaken. Moreover, Haack’s conclusion (6) implies that attempts to develop democratic epistemologies, such as feminist epistemologies, are unfounded: They all presuppose that values should play a role in justifying theories.

There is, however, nothing particularly feminist about the radical interpretations of science as social,<sup>47</sup> dismissals of the doctrine of value-freedom and defenses of democratic epistemologies: “What has science as social to do with feminism? Nothing” (op.cit.: 115). Indeed, arguments in contemporary debates in favor of a radical sociology of science and democratic epistemologies are prominently defended by those positioning themselves as feminist epistemologists.<sup>48</sup> The arguments as such are, however, not feminist in any exclusive sense. In practice there are both radical sociologists and democratic epistemologists who are not feminists, and feminists, like Haack, who do not defend radical sociological approaches and democratic epistemologies; “neither all, nor only, women, or feminists, favor all, or indeed any, of the ideas offered under the rubric feminist epistemology” (ibid.: 124). Besides, “it is not difficult to think of philosophers, neither female nor feminist, who have subscribed to the thesis of science as social in those radical interpretations” (ibid.: 115).<sup>49</sup> More

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<sup>47</sup> Haack does not intend to say that there is something feminist about the moderate interpretations of science as social. Her main ambition is precisely to disconnect the notion of feminism from any particular epistemological position.

<sup>48</sup> Haack’s main targets are Sandra Harding and Helen Longino, to whom she refers systematically. There are, however, several critical references also to other proponents of feminist epistemology (1998: 104-136). References to proponents of radical sociological approaches that are not primarily known to be feminist epistemologists (even though they might support the claims for some version of a feminist epistemology) are rare, except from the repeated references to Richard Rorty. Bruno Latour and Steve Fuller are however mentioned (op.cit.: 121, n. 17).

<sup>49</sup> Even though Haack does not come up with examples in this passage. Elsewhere she mentions, however, Rorty, Latour and Fuller, who are not primarily known to be feminist epistemologists. The moderate interpretation of science as social is also defended by feminists (such as Haack herself) and non-feminists alike: “In the modest



important, feminist arguments in favor of a radical sociology of science and democratic epistemologies are not in principle different from non-feminist arguments. Indeed, the feminist proponents of radically social and democratic epistemologies typically emphasize that science is the product of processes of social negotiation that are crucially gendered, that value-laden views on gender, as a subset of other value-laden views, are inseparable from scientific inquiry, and that epistemologies ought to be democratic also with regard to gender. However, this is a matter of difference in emphasis, not in principle: To claim that science is a gendered social construction, is simply an elaboration of the general claim that science is a social construction. The arguments for epistemologies to be gender democratic add nothing, in principle, to the arguments for epistemologies to be democratic.<sup>50</sup>

And even the emphasis on gender is questionable, according to Haack. Obviously, any gender perspective connected to misconceived sociological doctrines and flawed prescriptions for democracy in the context of justification, ought to be dismissed. If, indeed, an emphasis on gender is appropriate, it must be made compatible with a good, sober sociology of science, and avoid the imperialist inclination to turn theoretical justification into an issue of values: Feminist values should be considered only in the context of discovery and the context of practical application. However, Haack considers feminists' focus on gender, even in these contexts, as highly exaggerated. Feminists overstate, for example, the problem of sexism in processes of academic recruitment and in funding policies (op.cit.: 176, 203). Moreover, even moderate feminist sociologists of science tend to exaggerate how bad science is the outcome of sexism. It is the task of a good, sober sociology of science to investigate any lack of correlation between the socially accepted and the well warranted. In some cases, particularly in the human and social sciences, the explanation of mismatch between what is accepted and what is warranted is sexism:

In the social and human sciences, theories about women's capacities, or incapacities, *have* sometimes come to be accepted by the relevant scientific subcommunity when they were not well warranted; and the explanation of how this came about *would*, probably, refer to the prejudices and stereotypes common among scientists as well as in the larger society (original emphasis, op.cit.: 116).

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sense spelled out in the first section of this essay, it is true, and epistemologically significant, that science is social. [...] Peirce, Polanyi, Quine, Popper, come immediately to mind as philosophers neither female nor feminist who have acknowledged, with varying degrees of detail and subtlety, something along those lines" (1998: 115).

<sup>50</sup> That is: Epistemologies are not democratic if they are not democratic also with respect to gender, in the sense that just prescriptions ought to presuppose "the common humanity of women and men" (1998: 123): There are no morally relevant differences between women and men on the level of "justice and opportunity" (ibid.).

The idea that sexism also infects “the physical sciences” depends, however, on “simple exaggeration about the supposed ubiquity of sexual metaphors in the writings of scientists and philosophers of science” (op.cit.: 117), and on misunderstandings of the cognitive role of metaphors:

It is true that metaphors are not always just decorative, but can be cognitively important. It is true, also, that some cognitively significant metaphors implicitly compare natural with social phenomena [...]. But whether a cognitively important metaphor is fruitful, whether it makes us look in the right or in the wrong direction, *is independent of* the desirability or otherwise of the social phenomenon on which it calls (original emphasis, *ibid.*).

A scientific theory may be warranted, even though it makes use of “undesirable” sexist metaphors: Sexist metaphors ought to be criticized from an “ethical” or “political” perspective, but they do not make the theories as such into which they are integrated, unjustified (op.cit.: 119).

However, there are feminist epistemological proposals that do differ from general democratic epistemologies also in principle, proposals claiming that there are distinct women’s ways of knowing that are epistemologically privileged. These feminist “standpoint” epistemologies are not simply yet another group of democratic epistemologies (op.cit.: 116). Haack suggests, rather, that they betray the commitment to equality inherent in democratic epistemological proposals. The claim that “some standpoints, those of oppressed and disadvantaged classes, women among them” are “epistemologically better”, is incompatible with a “democratic thrust” (*ibid.*). Standpoint epistemologists pay only shallow lip-service to democracy and to “multiple standpoints” (*ibid.*). However, feminist standpoint epistemologies do have in common with democratic epistemologies the denial of premises 2) and 3) in Haack’s argument for value-freedom: Whether a theory is justified, and whether a theory is true (if indeed true is regarded as something theories ought to be), depends, according to the feminist standpoint epistemologists, on whether it is the outcome of procedures of inquiry that reflect women’s ways of knowing (*ibid.*: 126). Haack considers, however, this to be an indefensible epistemological standard: “I do not think that women are capable of revolutionary insights into the theory of knowledge not available, or not easily available to men” (1993: 8). First, she is “not convinced [...] that there *are* any distinctively female ways of knowing” (original emphasis, 1998: 125). There is simply no decisive factual evidence for this claim:

All *any* human being has to go on, in figuring out how things are, is his or her sensory and introspective experience, and the explanatory theorizing he or she devises to accommodate it; and differences in cognitive style, like differences in handwriting, seem more individual than gender determined (original emphasis, op.cit.: 126).

To Haack, “reversion to the notion of thinking like a woman is disquietingly reminiscent of old, sexist stereotypes” (op.cit.: 125). Second, she considers feminist standpoint epistemology to be based on the unlikely assumption that “oppressed, disadvantaged, and marginalized people are epistemically privileged by virtue of their oppression and disadvantage” (op.cit.: 126). Apart from the fact that Haack believes many feminists exaggerate the extensiveness and depth of women’s oppression, disadvantage and marginalization; if women were in fact extensively and deeply oppressed, disadvantaged and marginalized, this would not be a “good reason to think it true that oppression confers epistemic privilege,” because “one of the ways in which oppressed people are oppressed is, surely, that their oppressors control the information that reaches them” (ibid.). To be oppressed, disadvantaged and marginalized typically implies that one is deprived of the means to do genuine inquiry, not that one is better equipped. Hence, there is no reason, according to Haack, neither to modify nor replace premises 2) and 3) on the basis of feminist standpoint criticism.

## **CHAPTER 2**

# **THE ARGUMENT FOR VALUE-FREEDOM: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT**

### **2.0 Justification of theories – a value-free endeavor?**

In Chapter 1, I elaborated Susan Haack's argument against value-laden justification of theories, attempting to take its complexity into account (1.2). In this chapter, I discuss the premises in her argument, from 1) to 5). My ambition is to assess Haack's steps towards her conclusion 6), and introduce what I consider to be a more adequate understanding of the relationship between inquiry and values.

Haack's critique of radical sociological approaches in the study of science (as introduced in 1.3), will be discussed in Chapter 3, her critique of feminist standpoint epistemology (as introduced in 1.4), will be discussed in Chapter 4.

### **2.1 Assessing the first premise<sup>51</sup>**

#### **2.1.1 Separating significance from truth**

According to Haack, the sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true; bot significant and true. She claims, moreover, that it is possible to uphold a clear-cut distinction between the question of a theory's significance and the question of its justification as true. That significance-issues and truth-issues can be dealt with separately, in different contexts, is a fundamental assumption in her argument.

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<sup>51</sup> The sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true.

## 2.1.2 Haack's notion of discretion

However, already in the explication of the first premise, Haack herself questions this assumption. Genuine inquirers must, in her view, both justify theories and consider the question of significance properly. The latter requires discretion in the context of justification; the use of good judgment. It is *because* genuine theories are not any trivial, even if perhaps true, theory, but theories that are significant, her foundherentist criteria of justifications should be considered as guidelines applied with the use of good judgment, not as rules applied mechanically (1998: 96).<sup>52</sup> Haack's distinction between significance-issues and truth-issues is thus not that clear-cut after all. Theories are not adequately justified as true, in her view, without a use of good judgment, and good judgment when justifying a theory, is to take into account the significant questions that inspire the investigations, i.e. the non-trivial questions significant theories are answers to.<sup>53</sup>

And significance-issues are value-laden issues: We evaluate something as significant from different points of view, for example from an ethical or political point of view. Haack could have tried to argue that there are value-free ways to assess a theory's significance. But she does not.<sup>54</sup> When Haack says that the use of good judgment in the context of justification should be made with reference to the significant questions that inspire the investigations, this is said without reservation. She does not exclude instances where the questions rest on ethical-political considerations. Discretion in the context of justification is presented, rather, as value-laden; a good use of judgment is to take into account the significant questions asked, even if these are ethical-political questions. This suggests an inconsistency in Haack's argument,<sup>55</sup> because she claims at the same time that values should not influence justification.

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<sup>52</sup> There are, however, also other reasons for why discretion is needed in theoretical justification (see 2.3.3).

<sup>53</sup> "The goal of inquiry is to discover significant, substantial truths; and *since* there is a certain tension between the two aspects of the goal – it is a lot easier to get truths if you don't mind the truths you get being trivial – there can be, at best, guidelines, not rules, for the conduct of inquiry" (my emphasis, 1998: 94): The need for discretion in justification is presented as arising because of the requirement of significance.

<sup>54</sup> Generally speaking. There are, however, passages where she does (see 2.2.2).

<sup>55</sup> Haack does not support the strong coherentist claim that "a subject who has inconsistent beliefs, and hence an incoherent belief-set, is not justified in any of his beliefs. [...] the mere fact that there is, say, a hidden contradiction within the corpus of my beliefs about the geography of Russia is, surely, no reason for saying that I am not justified in believing that snow is white" (1993: 25). She would consider it a reason, however, for saying that some of her beliefs about the geography of Russia are not justified. According to foundherentism, the evaluative aspect of justification cannot be reduced to logical relations. The evaluative part of justification is, however, obviously, also about tracking down logical inconsistencies.

## 2.2 Assessing the second premise<sup>56</sup>

### 2.2.1 Significant theories – not only true

With her notion of discretion, Haack makes us doubt the second premise in her argument for value-freedom even before it is introduced. She cannot claim without contradiction both that theories should not be justified with reference to significance, and that they should, in the sense that good judgment in theoretical justification is judgment informed by the significant questions asked in the context of discovery.

Her explication of the second premise sharpens the inconsistency. Haack defines a theory, be it a trivial pseudo-theory or a genuine significant theory, as a set of propositions with truth-values. However, if the question of a theory's significance is considered a value-laden question, as Haack herself maintains,<sup>57</sup> significant theories do not consist only of propositions that are more or less true, i.e. propositions about what "is", but also of propositions about what "ought" to be; "propositions about what states of affairs are *desirable* or *deplorable*" (original emphasis, Haack 1998: 129).

In other passages she talks about values in terms of "befogging" or "emotionally appealing" wishes or desires that we are not necessarily aware or conscious of, terms suggesting that values are not necessarily something we can elaborate propositionally (op.cit.: 113). However, even if this is the case, significant theories cannot be defined exclusively as sets of propositions with truth-values, anyhow. There would still be a value-laden residue escaping our definition.

The question is whether this makes any difference. If a significant theory is not after all simply a set of propositions with truth-values, but also based on values, would it not still be possible to deal with the issues separately as Haack suggests; to handle ethical-political concerns in the context of discovery and in the context of practical application, and keep the context of justification value-free? This is not possible, however, unless the ambition to achieve theoretical justification is replaced with the ambition to achieve partial theoretical justification, i.e. unless inquirers restrict themselves as inquirers to justifying propositions

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<sup>56</sup> Whether a theory is justified, depends only on features indicative of its truth, not its significance.

<sup>57</sup> Generally speaking.

with truth-values, even if their theories also consist of ought-propositions (or a non-propositional equivalent). However, Haack does not claim to give simply a partial picture of justification:<sup>58</sup> To consider a theory's truth-indicativeness is presented as theoretical justification *proper*. And this would be a prescription consistent with Haack's idea that the sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true, only if such theories, like trivial pseudo-theories, only consisted of propositions with truth-values. Haack defines, however, a significant theory as a value-laden theory, i.e. as a set of propositions consisting also of propositions about what is "desirable or deplorable" (or non-propositional equivalents) (op.cit.: 129).

### **2.2.2 Why inquiring about features indicative of truth confronts the inquirer with ought-questions**

Thus, one cannot consistently claim both that the sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true and that theoretical justification can be value-free, because questions of significance are questions of what we value. Consistency requires that one of the claims is given up.<sup>59</sup> The question is, however, whether the context of justification can be kept free from values (i.e. whether we can uphold this claim), *even if* we give up the claim that the sole aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are significantly true, and claim, instead, that it is to end up with theories that are true. In other words, can inquirers investigating state of affairs avoid being confronted with ought-questions? I will argue that they cannot.

#### **i) Is, can and ought**

Answers to our questions about state of affairs, have implications for our assessments of what is feasible; of what we can do. If, for example,<sup>60</sup> investigations show that dogs lack the ability

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<sup>58</sup> In her defense of gradual, fallible justification, Haack does claim that theories are never completely supported by evidence, and thus that justification in this sense always will be partial. However, it is one thing to say that justification always will be partial despite our best efforts, another to say that we should reduce our efforts in advance (i.e. decide to concentrate only on parts of the theory, and leave other parts uninvestigated).

<sup>59</sup> Or that one admits that one's definition of justification is partial.

<sup>60</sup> There are different approaches to the use of examples in philosophical argumentation. My use of examples in the discussion of Haack's argument is meant to be illustrative. Onora O'Neill writes about this illustrative use of examples (often "hypothetical" or "ostensive" examples) in philosophy, in a discussion of Kant: "They [the examples in *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Moral* and in *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*] are indeed highly schematic examples. However, no addition of detail could make them fully determinate, and if they were cluttered with detail they would lose their pedagogic usefulness. Good illustrations need to be clear and simplified, even caricatures, if they are to get their point across. They need not, however, be trivial [...]. If [...] examples are seen as illustrations they may (but needn't) be trivial; but they must present sparse sketches

to do mathematics, efficient education policies cannot be made on the assumption that dogs possess the ability to do mathematics. It is not a sensible option, given what we know about dogs, to recommend, for example, establishing schools were dogs can cultivate their mathematical skills (when dogs in fact have no skills to cultivate). Or, for example, if our investigations show that global institutions of social redistribution must be based in a strong sense of solidarity among citizens to be stable, and that this strong sense of solidarity does not exist and cannot exist given what we know about how human beings relate to distant strangers, policies aiming at establishing and upholding stable global institutions will not be successful. If, on the other hand, a strong sense of solidarity among distant strangers are in fact present, or can be developed, or do not in fact constitute a necessary condition for upholding stable global institutions, policies aiming to upholding stable global institutions may be successful: It is feasible that such policies could be effective.<sup>61</sup>

In short, when we say something about state of affairs, we also say something about what can and cannot be done. When we say something about what can and cannot be done, we have, however, already involved ourselves in discussions about what ought to be done, as questions of what we ought to do and what we can do are related. That one can to something, does not imply that one ought to do it, i.e. ‘can’ does not imply ‘ought’, and that one ought not do something, does not imply that one cannot possibly do it. That it is impossible to act in certain ways, does, however, imply that acting in these ways cannot be prescribed, i.e. ‘cannot’ implies ‘ought not’, and ‘ought’ implies ‘can’. This relationship between ‘ought’ and ‘can’ is a conceptual relationship: It does not make sense to tell someone that she ought to do something, when this is something she cannot to. It is, however, also a normative relationship: A norm obliging us to do something we cannot do is not a norm we would subscribe to.

Consequently, because investigating state of affairs gives answers to questions of what can be done, investigations of state of affairs confronts us, at the same time, with ought-questions. That is: If investigations show that what we consider as something we ought to do is not feasible, this implies that we claim something about what ought to be, i.e. we claim that what is considered as something we ought to do is not something we ought to do, because we cannot do it.

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rather than deep or nuanced pictures” (1989: 168). O’Neill contrasts this way of using examples in philosophy, with the Wittgensteinian approach to examples and examples in problem-centered ethics.

<sup>61</sup> For a discussion of this example, see Holst (forthcoming c).



## ii) The value of theoretical virtues

A second reason why assessing propositions about state of affairs confronts the inquirer with ought-questions is the value-laden character of “theoretical virtues” (Longino 1994: 477). Haack mentions intellectual integrity, general carefulness and honesty in inquiry as theoretical virtues; virtues functional for genuine truth-seeking.<sup>62</sup> Theoretical virtues may, however, also be value-functional; functional for achieving certain values.<sup>63</sup> From the perspective of a feminist commitment, Helen Longino emphasizes the significance of two theoretical virtues in particular; “the virtue of ontological heterogeneity” and “the virtue of complexity of relationship” (op.cit.: 477-478). The virtue of ontological heterogeneity involves, Longino says, a commitment both to ensuring that a theory’s conceptual scheme makes room for human potentialities and to representing these potentialities as normal variations, not as deviance or defect. The virtue of complexity of relationship involves a commitment to represent human beings’ potentiality for flexible behavior in response to altered understandings of themselves and others. These two virtues are theoretical virtues, but they are also value-laden virtues: They are at the same time truth-functional and bearers of feminist values.

Haack would probably argue that what possibly makes Longino’s virtues into theoretical virtues, is that they are truth-functional, not that they are functional for certain values. The point is, however, that they are truth-functional virtues which are more functional for some values than for others. For example, in a situation where women are defined as not flexible, autonomous and creative, as in a patriarchal society, the virtues of heterogeneity and complexity will serve those who wish that women were flexible, autonomous and creative beings better than those who wish that women were not flexible, autonomous and creative beings. To this, Haack would probably respond that protecting definitions that are dear to us

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<sup>62</sup> Even Haack regards, however, for example, intellectual integrity as a moral virtue (not only as an epistemological and instrumental virtue (see. 2.4.2).

<sup>63</sup> This is not to deny that there are in fact “cognitive values” (Habermas 2003: 223). Habermas’ talk of cognitive values such as “coherence, simplicity and elegance”, “preservation of otherwise well-confirmed theories”, “predictive power” and “instrumental power” as “characterized by the fact that they are functionally related to truth, a feature that all other values lack” (2003: 223, 226). Haack would admit values of this sort in the context of justification. There might, however, be values involved when we single out what are to count as cognitive values, when we order them, articulate them and interpret them. Habermas are right when he claims that there are values not “functionally related to truth” and that there are values that are (ibid.). The latter values are, however, not necessarily neutral with respect to ought-questions (consider for example the value of instrumental power – to achieve what?), just as they are not necessarily neutral with respect to aesthetic values (consider for example the value of simplicity).

from investigation, is not what her crossword puzzle model of inquiry prescribes. When we investigate something, there are, however, always background beliefs<sup>64</sup> that are left uninvestigated. We do not investigate all the propositions we rely on in our studies. We concentrate on some of them at the expense of others. Certain values inspire certain investigations, other values other investigations. Feminist values have, for example, inspired scientists to replace patriarchal definitions of women with other definitions, and definitions of what women are capable of with unprejudiced investigation into what their capabilities are. Longino's proposal of feminist theoretical virtues is linked to the latter ambition. They are thus truth-functional, but at the same time value-laden.

### **iii) Value-laden concepts and distinctions in factual propositions**

A third reason why investigating state of affairs confronts us with ought-questions, is the value-laden character of the concepts and distinctions on which factual propositions may rely. Even if it could be consistently argued that significant theories consist of propositions about state of affairs only, this does not rule out the possibility that concepts and distinctions used in these propositions are value-laden. Consider, for example, Haack's claim that "it isn't true" that there is significant "systematic underevaluation of women's abilities" in present-day academia; her "nasty suspicion" that "sexism" in recruitment hardly constitutes a considerable problem (1998: 172). The belief that there is sexism in recruitment in present-day academia, in terms of a significant systematic underevaluation of women's abilities, is a belief that can be considered more or less true or false after proper investigation: What we are discussing is a proposition about state of affairs. But, clearly, at least two of the concepts included in this proposition are value-laden. When Haack talks about underevaluation of women's abilities, she presupposes a standard of evaluation: Women are *underevaluated* relative to a fair or just evaluation; to say that they are underevaluated, is to say that their abilities are not fairly or justly valued according to some standard. Sexism is also not a value-neutral term: It refers to unjust or unfair treatment of the sexes.<sup>65</sup>

Haack simply takes it for granted that propositions involving value-laden descriptions of this sort can be properly assessed in the context of justification. She suspects that there is less sexism and underevaluation of women than is often assumed, and considers this a proposition

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<sup>64</sup> To use Haack's own term.

<sup>65</sup> Certain kind of concepts and distinctions are inevitably value-laden. Consider Hilary Putnam's explication of descriptions that are unavoidably "beyond the fact/value-dichotomy" (1990: 135-178). Consider also Ånund Haga's notion of "critical descriptions" in the social sciences (1991: 252-281).

that can be considered more or less warranted after proper investigations. To prescribe justification of propositions containing value-laden descriptions is, however, inconsistent with her doctrine of value-freedom. To be consistent, she would either have to exclude value-laden descriptions from inquiry, or find a way of dealing with the values of such descriptions in the context of discovery and the context of practical application, leaving only stripped bare value-free descriptions for scrutiny in the context of justification. The latter option would imply replacing the ambition of theoretical justification with the ambition of partial theoretical justification. A stripped bare value-laden residue would be excluded from justification, even if it was part of the theory under scrutiny. It is, however, not possible to remove and isolate the value-component from all value-laden concepts and distinctions.<sup>66</sup> Behaviorists have tried. Behavioristic descriptions of, for example, slavery are, however, hardly value-free. “Representation” in an “Orwellian” fashion “describing whipping as a labor mobilization technique” expresses rather *other* values than a description of whipping as a violent means to control and humiliate (Anderson 1995a: 39).

To wholly exclude value-laden concepts and distinctions from inquiry would imply that Haack could no longer study sexism, and that historians could no longer study slavery. Social scientists could no longer study unemployment, because there is no value-stripped definition of unemployment; a definition beyond value-laden considerations on what is and what is not employment. Medical researchers could no longer study human illnesses, because there are no value-free classifications of human illnesses. It is impossible to classify “organisms living in the human body” into “pathogenic and nonpathogenic” without in any way “track[ing] human interests in health” (Anderson 1995a: 44).

Hence, a limitation of this kind, to allow for investigations of propositions constructed exclusively on the basis of value-free concepts and distinctions, seems to be too restrictive: It

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<sup>66</sup> Consider Putnam’s argument (based on readings of Iris Murdoch, Bernhard Williams and John McDowell): “Murdoch was the first to emphasize that language has two very different sorts of ethical concepts: abstract ethical concepts (Williams calls them ‘thin’ ethical concepts), such as ‘good’ and ‘right’, and more descriptive, less abstract concepts (Williams calls them ‘thick’ ethical concepts) such as, for example, *cruel*, *pert*, *inconsiderate*, *chaste*. Murdoch (and later, and in a more spelled-out way, McDowell) argued that there is no way of saying that the ‘descriptive component’ of the meaning of a word like *cruel* and *inconsiderate* is without using a word of the same kind; as McDowell puts the argument, a word has to be connected to a certain set of ‘evaluative interests’ in order to function in the way such a thick ethical word functions; and the speaker has to be aware of those interests and be able to identify imaginatively with them if he is to apply the word to novel cases or circumstances in the way a sophisticated speaker of the language would. The attempt of non-cognitivists to split such words into a ‘descriptive meaning component’ and a ‘prescriptive meaning component’ founders on the impossibility of saying that the ‘descriptive meaning’ of, say, *cruel* is without using the word *cruel* itself, or a synonym” (original emphasis, 1990: 166).

is not difficult to come up with examples of areas of inquiry in the human, social and medical sciences that could no longer be investigated were we to take this limitation seriously. It may be the case that these areas of inquiry cannot in fact be genuinely investigated. This would, however, not be Haack's argument. Her general assumption is, as her reflections on whether sexism "is true" exemplify, that "social institutions and social categories", such as slavery, unemployment and human illnesses, can be genuinely investigated (1998: 113, 172). Haack, once more, denies the implications of her own doctrine of value-freedom.<sup>67</sup>

#### **iv) Burdens of judgment**

A fourth reason why investigating state of affairs confronts us with ought-questions, is what John Rawls refers to as "the burdens of judgment"; "the sources, or causes, of disagreement between reasonable persons" (1996: 55). Rawls introduces the burdens of judgment to explain why "reasonable disagreement or disagreement between reasonable persons" occurs (ibid.).<sup>68</sup>

Four of the burdens on Rawls' "not complete list" of "the hazards involved in the correct exercise of our powers of reason and judgment", "apply mainly to the theoretical uses of reason" (op.cit.: 56), when state of affairs are investigated. One of them is the burden of different "total experience":<sup>69</sup>

To some extent (how great we cannot tell) the way we assess evidence [...] is shaped by our total experience, our whole course of life up to now; and our total experiences must always differ. Thus, in a modern society with its numerous offices and positions, its various divisions of labor, its many social groups and their ethnic variety, citizens' total experiences are disparate enough for their judgments to diverge, at least to some degree, on many if not most cases of any significant complexity (op.cit.: 56-57).

Our unique total experience as concrete persons shape our personality, our bodies, our values and idiosyncracies, and influence our judgment, for example when we "assess evidence" (ibid.). Hence, this burden of judgment, a source of reasonable disagreement, is incompatible

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<sup>67</sup> Can we rule out that concepts and distinctions are value-laden in for example theoretical physics and mathematics? I will return to this question in 2.4.4.

<sup>68</sup> Reasonable disagreement is disagreement between "persons who have realized their two moral powers [they have a capacity for a sense of justice and a capacity for a conception of the good] to a degree sufficient to be free and equal citizens in a constitutional regime, and who have an enduring desire to honor fair terms of cooperation and to be fully cooperating members of society. Given their moral powers, they share a common human reason, similar powers of thought and judgment: they can draw inferences, weigh evidence, and balancing competing considerations" (Rawls 1996: 52, 55).

<sup>69</sup> The other three are listed in Rawls (1996: 56).

with the idea of value-freedom in theoretical justification. Genuine inquirers cannot abstract themselves from their “whole course of life” (ibid.).<sup>70</sup>

#### v) Significance – a question of values

Thus, inquirers investigating state of affairs are confronted with ought-questions. Even if one considers the sole aim of inquiry to be to end up with theories that are simply true (and not significantly true), theoretical justification will be influenced by values. If this was not the case; if value-freedom in theoretical justification was in fact possible, Haack *could*, however, have made a consistent argument where she defended truth as the aim of inquiry and value-free theoretical justification at the same time. But the sole aim of inquiry, in her view, is to end up with theories that are significantly true. And this claim is only consistent with the claim that theoretical justification is value-free, *if* it can be argued that questions of significance can be answered in a value-free way.<sup>71</sup>

In *The Advancement of Science* (1993) Philip Kitcher argues that “science aims at the *significant* truths, and that significance is a matter of identifying natural kinds, formulating unifying general principles, and so forth” (original emphasis, quoted in Kitcher 2002: 552). Kitcher now considers this idea to be “suspect” (ibid.), because “significance is determined by us and our evolving interests”, i. e. there are no natural kinds (op.cit.: 555). There is no sharp boundary between “epistemic” and “practical”: “[...] there is no context-independent notion of significance, and epistemic significance is intertwined with past and present practical projects” (Kitcher 2001: 148). Generally speaking, Haack tends to agree with the latter position. She acknowledges that questions of significance, at least in most cases, confront us with practical, non-epistemic concerns,<sup>72</sup> confident that one can argue for value-freedom without denying this point: In genuine inquiry the question of a theory’s significance, whether value-laden or not, is not to be dealt with in the context of justification anyway, according to her prescriptions. Haack suggests, however, that significant research questions in the natural

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<sup>70</sup> Rawls suggests, however, that the burdens of judgment do not apply in natural science: “It [our attempt to reason with one another] seems to do so [lead to reasonable agreement] in natural science, at least in the long run (1996: 55). Rawls does not advance this suggestion.

<sup>71</sup> Or if one admits that one’s definition of theoretical justification is partial.

<sup>72</sup> Even if she at times seems to deny it. Consider her comparison between science and law in a recent article. In contrast to science, “the quest for truth in the courtroom” is a “kind of inquiry” that is “constrained not only by the demands of evidence, but also by considerations of principle and policy” (Haack 2004: 18). Scientific inquiry is, however, also constrained by principles and policies, only of another kind than inquiry in the courtroom.

sciences can be value-free.<sup>73</sup> She suggests a distinction between the human and social sciences (and perhaps the more applied natural sciences) on the one hand, and (at least the more theoretical) natural sciences on the other, when it comes to the relationship between a theory's significance and values.<sup>74</sup> What Haack seems to say, is that it is hard, perhaps impossible, to avoid involving oneself in discussions about values when asking significant research questions in the human and social sciences, but also that it is hard to even make sense of how such discussions have any relevance when asking significant research questions in (at least some of) the natural sciences. In theoretical physics, mathematics and similar disciplines you can talk without contradiction about significant theories as sets of propositions with truth-values, because the research questions are not "politicized" in these disciplines as they are in other disciplines (op.cit.: 119).

If this were to be accepted, Haack would have to modify the scope of her argument. She would have to admit that value-freedom is achievable only in (some of) the natural sciences, not in science or in inquiry as such. Alternatively, she could sustain that value-freedom is generally achievable, and take up the position that most of our investigations, inside and outside science, apart from in a limited set of cognitive practices pursued in some of the natural science departments, represent pseudo-inquiry. This is, however, not the picture presented elsewhere in *Manifesto*. For example, even if Haack tells us that there is more fake and sham reasoning in the human and social sciences than in the natural sciences, because research in these areas "bears most directly on politically contested issues" (op.cit.: 98), she does not claim that fake and sham reasoning is all there is in these areas. There is, rather, "good" and "bad" science even here: There are examples of pseudo-inquiry and examples of genuine inquiry also of issues that are more "directly" political (op.cit.: 98-99).

Moreover, it can be argued that significant theories even in theoretical physics, mathematics and similar disciplines depend on values, if for no other reason, then at least for the fundamental, but often forgotten reason, that to institutionalize inquiry at all,<sup>75</sup> in whatever area, as well as to answer only questions that are of significance to us and not any trivial

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<sup>73</sup> "The claim began to be heard (significantly, mainly from feminist philosophers, sociologists, and literary theorists, not from feminist physicists and chemists) that sexism infects *all* the sciences, the physical sciences included" (original emphasis, 1998: 117). In the passage that follows Haack characterizes this claim as an "exaggeration" and a "misunderstanding" (ibid.). She is "simply baffled by how work on quantum physics, say [...] could be undertaken from a feminist point of view" (1998: 116).

<sup>74</sup> The scope of Haack's claim on this point is not clear. She talks mostly about physics, but mentions also chemistry and biology (1998: 117).

<sup>75</sup> Haack argues herself that the decision to inquire reflects goodness and virtue (1998: 15).

question in these inquiries, i.e. to make only what Haack would refer to as genuine inquiry, are value-laden endeavors.

If citizens in a polity decide to use the limited resources available to institutionalize genuine inquiry, then there are less resources left for them to do other things. “The normal conditions under which human cooperation is both possible and necessary” are “conditions of moderate scarcity” (Rawls 1999: 110). Scarcity is what John Rawls refers to as a “circumstance of justice” (op.cit.: 109):<sup>76</sup> “Natural and other resources are not so abundant that schemes of cooperation become superfluous” (op.cit.: 110). Citizens’ decisions to do some things, are also decisions not to do other things.

Moreover, their decisions results in particular “division[s] of social advantages” (op.cit: 110), because “the normal conditions under which human cooperation is both possible and necessary” is also a condition of “conflict of interests” (ibid.):<sup>77</sup> People have “their own plans of life [...] or conceptions of the good [that] lead them to have different ends and purposes, and to make conflicting claims on the natural and social resources available” (ibid.). Hence, a polity’s decision to spend its limited resources on institutionalizing genuine inquiry, for example to establish a university, is a decision more in accordance with certain people’s plans of life or conceptions of the good than other people’s plans of life or conceptions of the good, more in some people’s interest than in other people’s interest. Under “conditions of moderate scarcity” this decision is a prescription for a certain “division of social advantages” (ibid.). This is so because some people consider participation in institutionalized genuine inquiry to be a path towards self-realization, while others have no wish to pursue this way of life, but also, more importantly, because some have “interests”, “ends and purposes” that would be facilitated by the establishment of institutions of genuine inquiry, while others do not (ibid.).<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Rawls refers to moderate scarcity as one of the objective circumstances of justice (1999: 109). Rawls’ outline of the circumstances of justice is part of his description of the human situation, what Otfried Höffe refers to as *conditio humana*. A theory of justice is a theory of moral justification in the human situation: “Das Argumentationsmuster der politischen Legitimation heisst deshalb: Anthropologie plus Ethik. Durch die moralischen Seite entgeht die politische Legitimation dem Sein-Sollens Fehler, durch die anthropologische Seite zusätzlich dem Vorwurf eines blossen, von allen deskriptiven Fragen abgekoppelten Sollens” (Höffe 1989: 218, on the term ‘political’, see 2.4.6).

<sup>77</sup> This is one of the subjective circumstances of justice (Rawls 1999: 110).

<sup>78</sup> For example, would those who are in power in a system based on authority and tradition have more reason to oppose the institutionalization of genuine inquiry, and less reason to oppose arrangements encouraging inquiry of trivial issues, or arrangements not encouraging truth-seeking at all, than the disadvantaged in this system, because genuine inquiry might result in knowledge that casts doubt on the rationality and legitimacy of existing power relations: Inquiry might highlight that the system is inefficient and that people are oppressed.

In this sense, a polity's decision to institutionalize genuine inquiry is not value- and interest-neutral.

Citizens, however, have also roughly similar needs and interests, or needs and interests in various ways complementary, so that mutually advantageous cooperation among them is possible (ibid.). The institutionalization of genuine inquiry may be thought of as a common interest or good of this sort. That institutionalized inquiry might be a common good, does not, however, make the decision to institutionalize inquiry value-free, only less controversial.<sup>79</sup>

Other questions are what the investigators of institutionalized investigations should investigate, and how the outcome of their investigations should be applied; which research questions and applications of research that are considered significant. Haack herself suggests that these are value-laden questions: "Funding priorities" and how we "apply [...] scientific discoveries" depend on our values (1998: 119). In the circumstances of justice what we fund and how we apply knowledge, depend on what we consider to be of interest; they are "ethical or political questions" (op.cit.: 119).<sup>80</sup>

Furthermore, decisions about funding and application are shaped by those who are allowed to make them, and by the processes in which they are made; by how and to what extent

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<sup>79</sup> Can we have an interest in deciding to institutionalize natural-scientific inquiry that is value-free? The early Jürgen Habermas argued that certain "Erkenntnisinteressen" can be inferred from human anthropology; *conditio humana* is an interested condition (it is a context of discovery that is always already interested). The institutionalization of the natural sciences express, according to Habermas, "ein technisches Interesse" that human beings have because they are beings with certain characteristics (Heidegren 2002: 221-240). Karl-Otto Apel argues that "das Erkenntnisinteresse an Objektivierung" linked first and foremost to the institutionalization of the natural sciences has a *transcendental* status (1994a: 25): "Ich muss betonen, dass ich hier von einem *notwendigen, internen Erkenntnisinteresse* spreche, und nicht etwa von einer lediglich *psychologisch oder soziologisch relevanten externen Motivation wissenschaftlichen Forschens*. Das, wovon ich rede, ist ein *technisches Interesse*, – doch nicht in irgendeinem *externen* oder *empirisch nachweisbaren*, sondern im *transzendentalpragmatischen Sinne*" (original emphasis, ibid.). However, both Habermas and Apel consider there to be more fundamental knowledge interests than the technical interest dominating, in particular, the natural sciences. Apel argues that there also is "[ein] *zweite[s] Erkenntnisinteresse* – das am *Verstehen anderer Menschen*" (original emphasis, 1994a: 27); an interest in understanding that ultimately spurs inquiry in the humanities and, to different degrees, in the social sciences (op.cit.: 31). Habermas outlines a similar scheme (although he connects the social sciences with a particular (third) interest in emancipation). Acting upon anthropological or transcendental knowledge interests in the social world, where the circumstances of justice apply, is, however, to act under conditions where acting has value-implications.

<sup>80</sup> Haack does consider "pressure to solve problems which are perceived as socially urgent, rather than freedom to pursue those most susceptible of solution in the present state of knowledge" a "potential hindrance" to the conducting of "good, honest, thorough, scrupulous inquiry" (op.cit.: 98). This is, however, a warning against inquiry led by short-term interests (and in any field of inquiry, not only in the natural sciences). This is not a warning against interested funding as such. Haack is critical of funders that encourage unmeritocratic recruitment practices, preposterism, value-laden justification of theories and inquiry primarily led by short-term interests. Her criticism adds up to a prescription for "virtuous" funding; funding encouraging intellectual integrity among inquirers (1998: 15).



scientists, citizens and funders are included. Haack acknowledges that principles of representation, deliberation and recruitment are “ethical and political” (ibid.). Her acknowledgment is, however, not followed up by reflections on the interconnections between such principles, funding-priorities and application.<sup>81</sup>

Consequently, in the circumstances of justice of the human condition, considerations on theories’ significance are value-laden considerations, even in the more theoretical natural sciences. Haack’s exceptionalist account of certain kinds of natural-scientific inquiry as value-free, reproduces a “myth of purity” (Kitcher 2001: 91).<sup>82</sup>

## **2.3 Assessing the third premise<sup>83</sup>**

### **2.3.1 Supported by evidence. What does it mean in the human and social sciences?**

Haack claims that the human and social sciences bear more directly on politically contested issues than do the natural sciences, that there is – because of this – more fake and sham reasoning in the human and social sciences (ibid.), as well as more theorizing “infected” by sexism (op.cit.: 98, 117), are imprecise and misleading. There is, however, a philosophically relevant difference between the natural sciences and the human and social sciences, i.e. a difference more profound than the fact that studies of the natural world and studies of human beings and society are very often, obviously, studies of different empirical objects.<sup>84</sup> This

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<sup>81</sup> See 2.4.5.

<sup>82</sup> Whether all inquirers are aware of the value-laden basis of their investigations, is a different question. However, as Kitcher points out, “the absence of any practical intent is [not] enough to isolate a branch of inquiry from moral, social, or political critique” (2001: 91). It is questionable, however, whether it is a good idea to state, for example, that one “work[s] on quantum physics [...] from a feminist point of view” (Haack 1998: 116). This statement is easily associated with indefensible politicized pseudo-investigations. This and similar statements from feminists may, however, simply be a way of saying, for example, that one is faithful to virtues of heterogeneity and complexity or similar virtues that are functional for feminist values, or that one considers it significant to assess the values and interests of funders of quantum physics, the priorities made when knowledge from research in quantum physics is applied, the norms of deliberation within and the recruitment to the research community of quantum physicists, from the perspective of gender justice.

<sup>83</sup> A theory is most probably true if it can be demonstrated that it is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence.

<sup>84</sup> Only very often, and not always, because disciplines considered to belong to the natural sciences, such as medicine and biology, also have human beings and society as their object of study, and contemporary social science is concerned, for example, with studies of human interaction with nature. My intention here is, however, not to discuss subtly where the border between the natural sciences and the human and social sciences should be drawn in the institutional context of modern science, but rather to say something of general relevance when our concern is “the study of [wo/]man” (Skjervheim 1959).

profound difference between studying nature and studying human beings is lost, however, in Haack's elaboration of the third premise in her argument for value-freedom.

To demonstrate that a theory is supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence requires something different in the human and social sciences than in the natural sciences. If we should not talk about this difference in terms of degree of "politicization" (op.cit.: 119), how, then, should we talk about it? What is the basic distinction between making nature the object of science and "the study of [wo/]man" (Skjervheim 1959)? As noted by Karl-Otto Apel, the distinction has something to do with the fact that human beings can contest (or subscribe to) the inquirer's interpretations and explanations of their behavior:

[...] die unvollständige Objektivation, die die Möglichkeit des *Sprechens über Dritte* begründet, [...] konstituiert sozusagen ein *Subjekt-Objekt*, d.h. ein *Objekt der Erkenntnis* [...] das zugleich ein *Ko-Subjekt* [...] bleibt [...] – ein Ko-Subjekt, das möglicherweise in die Diskurs- und Forschergemeinschaft eintreten könnte (original emphasis, 1994a: 33)

In the human and social sciences the object the inquirer wants to know something about is a fellow subject; a subject-object, who is capable of questioning the inquirer's interpretation and explanation of her behavior<sup>85</sup> on the basis of what she considers to be the real reasons for her actions; her "Interessen, Zielsetzungen und Überzeugungen" or "Handlungsgründe" (op.cit.: 37).<sup>86</sup>

Moreover, the subject-object's own reasons, are not something the inquirer can simply decide to disregard.<sup>87</sup> If we have no idea of, or do not care about, the subject-object's reasons for behaving as she does, our interpretations of her behavior will be inadequate, because we will not be able to understand them properly. This is not to say that the reasons given by the

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<sup>85</sup> Even if she does not in fact question the inquirer's interpretation or explanation of her behavior. There are several reasons why a subject-object does not contest the inquirer's claims. She might, after having deliberated upon them (by herself or with others), agree with the inquirer. On other occasions, she might not even consider questioning them, because the inquirer's interpretations and explanations are in accordance with the tacit knowledge of their shared lifeworld: They are in "the communication-domain in which [...] [they] tacitly presuppose and recognize the validity-claims implicit in utterances" (Habermas 1984: 140). In addition, the subject-object might not be able to question the inquirer's claims because she lacks the cultural or social resources necessary to participate in discourse, because existing norms disallow it (for example because the authority of the inquirer is considered unquestionable), because communication between subject-object and the inquirer has not been institutionalized properly, or because she has a "weak will" (Elster 1989: 36-37, 45-48).

<sup>86</sup> In cases where it is difficult or impossible for the subject-object to actually participate "in die Diskurs- und Forschergemeinschaft" (Apel 1994a: 33), for example because she is dead, the inquirer has to approach her "als virtuelle Kommunikationspartner [...], mit denen er sich – der regulativen Idee nach – über ihre Beweggründe verständigen könnte" (op.cit.: 37).

<sup>87</sup> Adequate interpretations of texts are also interpretations that take seriously "[die] Interessen, Zielsetzungen und Überzeugungen" of the subject-object (in this case, the author).

subject-object add up to an adequate interpretation of her behavior.<sup>88</sup> They also do not necessarily explain her behavior.<sup>89</sup> In any area of inquiry, however, explanandum is always also interpretandum; the subject's relation to the object ("die Subjekt-Objekt-Relation der Erkenntnis") presupposes intersubjective understanding ("die Subjekt-Ko-Subjekt-Relation kommunikativer Verständigung") (op.cit.: 26):

Weil jede Art objektiver Erkenntnis notwendig stets die Struktur *zeichenvermittelter Erkenntnis von etwas als etwas* hat, d.h. eines propositionalen Sachverhalts, muss die *Subjekt-Objekt-Relation* der Erkenntnis immer von der *Subjekt-Ko-Subjekt-Relation kommunikativer Verständigung* ergänzt sein [...]. Denn in dieser letzteren Dimension von Kommunikation muss der *Sprachgebrauch* [...] festgelegt werden, und in derselben Dimension muss schliesslich auf dem Wege des argumentativen Diskurses *Konsens* (oder Dissens) über Wahrheitsansprüche<sup>90</sup> erreicht werden (original emphasis, *ibid.*).

We have to interpret, before we can explain. If our explanandum is human action we have, first, to make it our interpretandum; we have to ask what the action means, we have to try to understand it. Understanding implies here both "Verstehen der Bedeutung" (i.e. also the meaning (*Bedeutung*) of the reasons for action given by the actor) and "Erreichen einer Einigung über Geltungsansprüche" (i.e. also on the validity-claims (*Geltungsansprüche*) raised by the actor) (op.cit.: 18).<sup>91</sup> Both are intersubjective endeavors. Understanding is established among fellow subjects, not privately.

Natural scientists, who try to reach an intersubjective understanding of the behavior of non-human beings, need to treat each other as fellow subjects. For human and social scientists matters are more complex. When the interpretandum is human action, there are one or more additional fellow subjects to consider; the one or those acting. If the accounts of these subject-objects are excluded from the interpretative agreement on what is going on, the agreement will be biased: Not all relevant fellow subjects have been included in its establishment, and the interpretation will be inadequate.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Just as the intentions of the author do not add up to an adequate interpretation of her text.

<sup>89</sup> For example, could explanans be "(die) nicht intendierten (sogenannten *heterogenen*) Handlungsfolgen" (original emphasis, Apel 1994a: 36).

<sup>90</sup> And other types of validity-claims.

<sup>91</sup> That is: If the inquirer disagrees with the subject-object they may understand one another (in terms of *Verstehen*), but they do not come to an understanding (in terms of *Verständigung*). The inquirer can, of course, disagree with the subject-object. Apel's point is that inquirers, trying to understand the actions of subject-objects (in terms of *Verständigung*), must approach subject-objects' reason-giving from a first person perspective; the inquirer must position herself as an 'I' agreeing or disagreeing. See also 2.3.2 and Chapter 7.

<sup>92</sup> But could we not recognize that the objects of the human and social sciences are subject-objects without granting them the status of *relevant* fellow subjects in the process of reaching an intersubjective understanding? Apel argues that we cannot: We should treat our fellow human beings, including those we make our object of

What about if our explanandum is not human action, but rather social structures; “(die) nicht intendierten (sogenannten *heterogenen*) Handlungsfolgen” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 36)? Some argue that explanations of structural reproduction or change in social life do not necessarily have to include references to action and reasons for action.<sup>93</sup> Others believe positions of this sort make “an unhappy marriage of hermeneutics and functionalism”, and maintain that structural reproduction and change in social life have a micro-foundation on the level of human action that must be included in our explanations: “Systems models” require “a theory of individual and collective action” (Joas 1996: 217, 222).<sup>94</sup> If the latter is correct, then studies of social structures are also studies that confront the inquirer with subject-objects that must be consulted as fellow subjects, i.e. if they are not consulted as fellow subjects, the inquirers will not be able to assess adequately whether a theory (about social structures) is supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence or not.

Either way, Haack is wrong in presuming, simply, that the “objects of sociological theories” are similar to the objects of the natural sciences in all relevant aspects (1998: 113). It is precisely because fundamentally different objects are involved; because of the particular subject-objects investigators of human action (and perhaps of social structures) are confronted with, studies of the natural world needs to be distinguished from studies of the human and social world.

### **2.3.2 Apel reads Peirce:<sup>95</sup> A realist discourse theory of truth**

Even in areas of study where we cannot possibly treat our objects of study as fellow subjects, we will, however, still have to enter the hermeneutical circle, Apel maintains: “[...] die

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study, as fellow subjects with their own reasons for action, because if we do not, we will commit a performative self-contradiction. I discuss Apel’s argument in 2.3.3 and in Chapter 7.

<sup>93</sup> This is Apel’s position: “Die quasi-nomologische Sozialwissenschaft” can do without a hermeneutical dimension, and should, generally, be considered, together with the natural sciences, as being led by “das Erkenntnisinteresse an *Welt-Objektivierung*” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 25, 37).

<sup>94</sup> Joas uses the terms functionalism and systems models because his argument is framed to target Habermas’ attempt “to provide a synthesis between his [Habermas’] ideas, based on hermeneutics and action theory, with Luhmann’s functionalism” and “systems theory” specifically (1996: 219). Another possibility is, obviously, to defend non-functionalist causal explanations of structural reproduction and change, which do not refer to human actions and reasons for acting.

<sup>95</sup> Consider Peirce 1972, 1990.

*Subjekt-Objekt-Relation* der Erkenntnis [muss] immer von der *Subjekt-Ko-Subjekt-Relation kommunikativer Verständigung* ergänzt sein” (original emphasis, 1994a: 26). Even in the case of the natural sciences, the relevant fellow subjects have to understand one another in the double sense suggested: “Verständigung über etwas” requires “Verstehen der Bedeutung” (understanding what is meant) and “Erreichen einer Einigung über Geltungsansprüche” (reaching agreement on the validity-claims involved) (1994a: 18, 1994b: 199).

The requirements of understanding, however, are not necessarily dealt with explicitly in actual ongoing dialogue. Understanding among fellow subjects, within scientific communities as well as within other communities, is very often an implicit achievement. As summarized by Jürgen Habermas, communication proceeds “undisturbed” if

[...] the speaking/acting subjects a) make *intelligible* the pragmatic meaning of the interpersonal relation (which can be expressed in the form of a performative sentence) as well as the meaning of the propositional content of their utterance, b) recognize the *truth* of the statement made with the speech-act, c) recognize the *rightness* of the rule of which the performed speech-act may count as the fulfillment, d) do not bring the *truthfulness* of the parties to the communication into doubt (my emphasis, 1984: 145).<sup>96</sup>

In these cases, there is what Habermas refers to as a “background consensus” based on “reciprocal recognition” of the involved validity-claims (ibid.). “*Questions of truth*”, as well as questions of intelligibility, rightness and truthfulness, arise only when the background consensus is disturbed,<sup>97</sup> i.e. “if the validity-claims naively imputed in contexts of action become problematic” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 143). Thus, if A and B misunderstand each other (in terms of “Verstehen”) in the course of action, A might start asking B questions about

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<sup>96</sup> Habermas refers in this connection to “the four validity-claims”: Also “Verstehen der Bedeutung” (understanding what is meant), in Apel’s sense, implies “reciprocal recognition of validity-claims” (Habermas 1984: 145). This is consistent with Apel’s elaboration of “Verstehen” elsewhere: “Unter den diskursrelevanten *Geltungsansprüchen* verstehe ich – mit Jürgen Habermas – genau vier *Ansprüche*, nämlich: *erstens*, den Anspruch auf intersubjektiv gültigen *Sinn* [...], *zweitens*, den *Wahrheitsanspruch* [...], *drittens*, den *Aufrichtigkeit* – oder *Wahrhaftigkeitsanspruch* [...], *viertens*, den normativen und insbesondere moralisch relevanten *Richtigkeitsanspruch* (original emphasis, 1994a: 23). Hence, like Habermas, Apel considers “Verstehen der Bedeutung” to be about “Erreichen einer Einigung über Geltungsansprüche”, even if on other occasions he conceptualizes “Verstehen” as a preparatory first step where no validity-claims are raised (op.cit.: 18). Habermas, however, is also ambivalent on this point. He says in another passage: “If the linguistic rules used by one partner are so unclear to the other that the latter does not understand the sentence uttered, both can attempt to effect an agreement about the language they mutually intend to employ. To this extent intelligibility could be considered a discursive validity claim. But the difference is unmistakable. Truth-claims and rightness-claims function in everyday speech and interaction as claims that are accepted with an eye to the possibility that, if need be, they can be discursively made good. Intelligibility on the contrary, as long as a communication in general proceeds undisturbed, presents a claim that has already factually been made good; it is not merely a promise. Therefore I prefer to count intelligibility among the conditions of communication and not among the validity-claims raised within communication” (1984: 146).

<sup>97</sup> For example when claims taken for granted are made into topic of scientific discourse.

intelligibility: “How do you mean that? How should I understand that? What does that mean?” (op.cit.: 145). If A in the course of action notices that B holds something to be true that is inconsistent with what A holds to be true, A might start asking questions about truth: “Is it really the way you say it is? Why is it that way and not otherwise?” (op.cit.: 146). If interaction makes visible that A and B have conflicting normative commitments, A might start articulating questions about rightness: “Why did you do that? Why did you not behave differently?” (ibid.). And finally, A might call into doubt the truthfulness of B: “Is he deceiving me? Is he deceiving himself about himself?” (ibid.).<sup>98</sup> Such questions about validity-claims – and their answers – are what constitute discourse.

Apel defends, as Habermas, a discourse theory of truth: Truth-seekers investigating state of affairs, disturb the background consensus and make truth-claims the object of discourse. Like Haack, Apel elaborates his notion of truth on the basis of Peirce’s theory of truth. Like Peirce’s theory of truth, Apel’s discourse theory is not an anti-realist consensus theory of truth, that disconnects the notion of truth from a notion of reality. “Die Subjekt-Objekt-Relation der Erkenntnis [muss] immer von der Subjekt-Ko-Subjekt-Relation kommunikativer Verständigung ergänzt sein” (Apel 1994a: 26). The relation between fellow subjects (“Subjekt-Ko-Subjekt-Relation”) does not, however, replace the subject’s relation to the object (“Subjekt-Objekt-Relation”). Understanding is about something (“über etwas”). Apel’s prescription is, rather, to integrate:

[...] *perceptual criteria* relating to the evidence of correspondence of our thought with [...] facts [...] [and] *coherence criteria* of logical inference into a grounded consensus through discursive arguments in the interpretation-community of scientists (my emphasis, 1994b: 196).<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Habermas considers questions of truthfulness, however, to be of a different sort than questions of truth and rightness: They are “questions we do not address to the untrustworthy person himself, but rather to a third party. The speaker suspected of untruthfulness can, if need be, be examined, for example, in a judicial process, or in (psycho-) analytical conversations” (1984: 146). Also, truthfulness is a non-discursive validity claim: “Claims to truthfulness can be settled only in contexts of action. Neither hearings nor analytical conversations between psychotherapist and patient may count as discourses in the sense of the cooperative quest for truth. Whether someone truthfully expresses his intentions or in his manifest utterances only feigns the imputed intentions, must show up in his actions if only we continue interacting with him long enough” (ibid.).

<sup>99</sup> In the case of the human and social sciences, where the objects of study are, typically, subject-objects, the relevant fellow subjects are, however, not only the scientists. Also, even when we talk about the natural sciences, the equation between interpretation-community and the community of scientists is too simple. Citizens should, for example, be included in reasonable ways in the interpretation-community of the natural sciences (see 2.4.5).

“The meaning of truth” is “discursive agreement” on the outcome of inquiry faithful to perceptual criteria and coherence criteria in “an indefinite community of sign-interpretation” (op.cit.: 182-183).

This indefinite community of sign-interpretation is thought of as an “*ideal* communication community”, that any real interpretation-community of scientists can only approach. Thus, the Peircian elaboration of “the meaning of truth” is to be understood as a “regulative idea” (original emphasis, Apel 2001: 2, 7). This implies that any actual intersubjective assessment, however thorough, considering a validity-claim to be true, is revisable in principle. Even our best knowledge; the outcome of discourse under close-to-ideal conditions, is fallible.

Furthermore, this approach to the meaning of truth should be understood as a critique of Kant’s notion of things-in-themselves: “Peirce [...] established the *internal connection* between truth related to *reality* and normatively demanded acceptability”: “the real is independent [...] from each piece of *factual* knowledge”, but not “from each *possible* piece of knowledge”; the knowable (original emphasis, op.cit.: 4-5).

### **2.3.3 Comparing Apel and Haack – elaboration, discussion and critique**

#### **i) Common features**

Apel’s Peirce-inspired approach to truth resembles Haack’s Peirce-inspired “epistemological reconstruction”.<sup>100</sup> Their outlines of the gradual and fallible character of any actual justification of truth-claims are similar. They share a certain critique of Karl Popper: Both regard epistemology as in need of a knowing subject – or, rather, of knowing subjects. In this sense, they both emphasize the social character of genuine inquiry; inquiry goes on in a community of inquirers. Their descriptions of the ideal epistemic community that our real investigations can only approach are similar. Haack’s foundherentism; her outline of the interplay of causal and evaluative aspects in justification, resemble Apel’s idea of an interplay of perceptual criteria and coherence criteria of warrant. Her critique of the Kantian notion of things-in-themselves resembles his. Both do not regard the notion of truth to be redundant in

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<sup>100</sup> The subtitle of *Evidence and Inquiry* is: *Toward Reconstruction in Epistemology*. Apel and Haack do not refer to one another as far as I am aware.

epistemology. And, finally, Apel's critique of Rorty's instrumentalist approach to argumentation,<sup>101</sup> resembles Haack's defense of non-cynical inquiry.

## **ii) Epistemology with or without moral philosophy?**

Despite common features, there are, however, differences between Haack and Apel. For example, are Haack's exclusive concerns about how to assess theories, meaning sets of truth-claims, and how to refute epistemic and ontological relativism.<sup>102</sup> Apel's concerns are also about how to assess rightness-claims, and how to refute moral relativism – and how to highlight the relevance of these concerns for philosophy of science (1990: 48-91).

If significant theories in fact consisted only of truth-claims, Haack's exclusive focus on questions of truth, might be considered reasonable. However, significant theories confront the inquirer also with ought-questions. This, if nothing else, makes Haack's narrow focus insufficient. In contrast to what Haack claims, an adequate reconstruction in epistemology requires in fact that one “venture[s] [...] into ethical theory” (1998: 167). Sticking to “logic, epistemology, philosophy of science”, as these fields are traditionally defined, will not do (ibid.).

Even philosophers of science who defend ideas of value-freedom in justification similar to Haack's, argue that philosophers of science should venture into ethical theory.<sup>103</sup> That is: Even if theoretical justification could have been kept free from values, the intervening of values in the context of discovery and in the context of practical application, is a reason for philosophers of science, whatever their view on value-freedom in justification, to take an interest in the discussions of moral and political philosophy.

Moreover, to institutionalize genuine inquiry is a value- and interest-laden endeavor. This is yet another reason for philosophers of science to take an interest in the discussions of moral

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<sup>101</sup> Apel's argument (that on this point is similar to that of Albrecht Wellmer) is elaborated in detail in Chapter 7.

<sup>102</sup> See 1.2.3.

<sup>103</sup> Philip Kitcher argues for value-freedom in theoretical justification: “[...] there is no basis for believing that value judgments inevitably enter into our appraisal of which of a set of rival hypotheses (if any) is approximately correct” (Kitcher 2001: 41). He argues, at the same time, for a partnership between philosophy of science and democratic theory. Philosophy of science needs to reflect on “the value of science”, on the relationship between “science and values”, and on “the role that the sciences should play in a democratic society” (op.cit.: xi-xii). He connects his own prescriptions for scientific inquiry to Rawls' notion of a well-ordered society (op.cit.: 117-136).



and political philosophy.<sup>104</sup> Haack's position, that we ought to make inquiries because they are valuable from an evolutionary point of view, is inadequate, because she does not make any effort to support her position with evidence, but, most importantly, because this is to naturalize a value question: She suggests that the question of the survival of the human species can be removed from the domain of values, because the answer is given by evolution (Haack 1998: 13-14). Haack indeed stresses that truth-seeking is not only instrumentally valuable; it is also a moral virtue. The relationship between her (primary) evolutionary argument and her idea of truth-seeking as moral is, however, unclear.

It is difficult to argue that truth-seeking is in everyone's interest, compatible with all conceptions of the good or "schemes of values" (Kitcher 2001: 152). There would be occasions where not all would prefer to know the truth.<sup>105</sup> Knowledge is not always "beneficial" for all (op.cit.: 147): "Having correct beliefs surely has something to do with the flourishing of a person's life, but so too does feeling unhappy" (op.cit.: 154). And citizens with certain schemes of values may be happier "trapped by illusions" (ibid.).<sup>106</sup> What may be argued, however, is that we owe each other the truth from a moral point of view. This would be Apel's argument: If we claim that something is, we "promise"<sup>107</sup> that we can justify it as true, or we disrespect our communicative partners.<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See 2.2.2. Kitcher puts it like this: "[...] we cannot set the value of apprehending significant truths on some higher plane, so that inquiry must inevitably take precedence over everyday concerns. [...] applications of the thesis that knowledge is good for us are problematic [...] because the impact of new knowledge on different groups of people may be radically different" (2001: 148).

<sup>105</sup> Kitcher asks those "who urge breezy dismissals of complaints about science" to imagine "that we gather overwhelming evidence" for the following examples, and "to reflect on the impact on our lives": "There are genetic differences among groups that have traditionally been distinguished from one another, differences that fix limits to the ability of some people who have been targets of discrimination and that fix properties of temperament in those who have been dominant; there are no possible ways of compensating for these differences [i]. Apparent human propensities to love and care for others are actually based upon manipulative strategies that are typically unconscious, and this is true of the most 'concerned' and 'altruistic' as well as those who are obviously exploitative [ii]. Stable human relationships are only possible in situations where people believe elaborate myths about themselves and their place in nature (iii). Human choices, decisions, and actions are simple functions of physiological factors, many of them thoroughly banal and directly responsive to external causes (diet, regimes of exercise, and so forth [iv]" (2001: 151-152).

<sup>106</sup> Hilary Putnam is too unconditional when he considers "the ideal of rational acceptability" as "part of our idea of human cognitive flourishing, and hence part of our idea of total human flourishing, of Eudaemonia," although many probably would subscribe to such a view of "flourishing" (1987: 134).

<sup>107</sup> Consider Dietrich Böhler's (2003a) explication of Apel's position (and the "Dialogversprechen"). I will return to this point shortly, and in Chapter 7.

<sup>108</sup> Whether inquiry should be institutionalized in a public institution; whether, for example, there should be a scientific institution, is a different question, and the concern of citizens to deliberate upon and decide.

### iii) Redescriptions and validity-claims

Like Haack, Apel dismisses Rorty's instrumentalist outline of justification: Rorty's explication of argumentation not as discourse, but as redescriptions which are more or less persuasive depending on the audience. As noted by Albrecht Wellmer, Rorty's "instrumentalist view of arguments is parasitic on a normative, first person perspective of a committed participant in the game of giving and asking for reasons" (2001: 6).<sup>109</sup>

Wellmer thinks, however, that Rorty's idea of redescription captures something essential that is excluded from Habermas' and Apel's outline of argumentation as discourse on validity-claims. The idea of redescription "*broaden[s]* [...] this [their normative] perspective [on arguments]" (my emphasis, *ibid.*). Rorty contrasts two ways of arguing, the traditional inferential way of arguing, and the dialectical way of arguing. In dialectical arguments there is a "partial substitution of redescription for inference", and vocabularies, not propositions,<sup>110</sup> are taken to be the "units of persuasion" (*op.cit.*: 15). Dialectical arguments are what matters, Rorty insists:

[...] revolutionary achievements in the arts, in the sciences, and in moral and political thought typically occur when somebody realizes that two or more of our vocabularies are interfering with each other, and proceeds to invent a new vocabulary to replace both (quoted in *ibid.*).

Wellmer disagrees: "I think that, indeed, every *interesting* form of argument (perhaps outside formalized disciplines) will have to be characterized by a partial substitution of redescription for inference" (original emphasis, *op.cit.*: 16). What Wellmer disagrees with, is the way Rorty sharply distinguishes between inferential and dialectical arguments:

New vocabularies are useful if they lead to a better web of beliefs, better practical orientations, a better self-understanding; and what better (more useful) here means, cannot be spelled out without reference to truth and justification in their ordinary sense. Conversely, our truth-oriented practices (practices of justification) cannot be fully understood, if we are not

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<sup>109</sup> Wellmer's, Apel's and Habermas' common critique of Rorty is further elaborated in Chapter 7. In this section I will highlight a point where Wellmer and Apel disagree.

<sup>110</sup> In pragmatist philosophy the basic unit of what Rorty refers to as inferential arguments is given different names. They are referred to, for example, as propositions, utterances, statements or speech acts (on the notion of speech act, see Cooke 1994: 131-132 and Habermas 1984: 138-139). In my discussion, I do not distinguish between these notions. What is important to note for the present purposes, is that epistemological problems need to be discussed with reference to knowing subjects; *someone* is proposing (uttering, making a statement or speech-acting). This implies that we talk about "natural language": "the actual use" of language, not "formalized semantical systems" (Apel 1994b: 176).

aware that ordinary questions of truth (related to the inferential form of argument) may at any given point of discourse give rise to a dialectical form of argument where not only single propositions but the language and its inferential network, that is the vocabulary and ways of speaking become the object of debate (op.cit.: 17).

This “converse” point is not adequately considered by Haack (ibid.). She acknowledges that “cognitive advance” is “often a matter of conceptual innovations marked by a new vocabulary”, but insists that these “innovations”, in the end, can be reduced to propositions that are more or less true (Haack 1998: 161).

The fundamental inadequacy of her approach is, however, that the assessment of conceptual innovation is reduced to a question of assessing truth-claims, not that “the units of persuasion” referred to are only propositions and not also vocabularies (Wellmer 2001: 17). Wellmer criticizes Habermas and Apel for making “single propositions [...] the object of debate”, and not also “the vocabulary and ways of speaking” (ibid.). Gunnar Skirbekk articulates a similar critique: Habermas’ and Apel’s elaboration of validity-claims fails to take the problem of “conceptual adequacy” properly into account, i.e. the problem of which vocabulary “gives a more adequate picture of the situation” (Skirbekk 2001: 10). The proper units of persuasion are, however, validity-claims; claims one can agree/disagree with on when the “background consensus” of the “course of action” is “disturbed”, for example when a “consensus” on something is made the topic of scientific investigation (Habermas 1984: 145). A single proposition might contain more than one validity-claim. Consider someone uttering that ‘there is slavery in Norway today’. One might ask whether this is true. One might ask what slavery means here; raise a question of intelligibility. And one might ask why, more precisely, slavery is considered a moral problem. Skirbekk and Wellmer ask us, in addition, to consider “the vocabulary and ways of speaking” when someone presents a “picture” of a “situation”, i.e. when we are dealing with a sequence of speech acts, a richer elaboration in certain “ways”, and the “object of debate” is not simply a single proposition (Wellmer 2001: 17, Skirbekk 2001: 10). However, in such cases, the objects of debate are also validity-claims. There are no deep differences between assessing a proposition about slavery, and assessing a richer description of slavery. Confronted with a description of this sort, we could ask what the interrelated concepts and distinctions of the description; the vocabulary or way of speaking about slavery, mean (i.e. “Verstehen der Bedeutung”): We could ask a question of intelligibility. Or we might ask whether and how such a way of talking about slavery could be

justified morally. Thus, a vocabulary's adequacy can be properly dealt with in a discourse on validity-claims.

Just as assessing propositions, assessing vocabularies might involve participation in more than one discourse. Wellmer points out how:

[...] argumentation may in many ways be intertwined with political struggle or a struggle for recognition in such a way, that arguments may win (or are imagined to possibly win) acceptance only after some process of re-education (as Rorty likes to say) – of male chauvinists, Neo-Nazis, Newtonian physicists, dead philosophers, Mullahs or foundationalists – has taken, or is imagined to have taken place (2001: 19).

Consider Haack's description of the (lack of) sexism in present-day academia (1998: 166-172). This description could be questioned from the perspective of truth. Another response would be to question the vocabulary. As highlighted by Rorty (1998a), the term sexism was until recently not a term that could be considered more or less true or false, because this and interrelated terms feminists have introduced, did not make sense<sup>111</sup> until a certain point in human history. The users of a feminist vocabulary, and those asking them what the vocabulary meant, i.e. questions of intelligibility, did not understand one another. The point in human history, when the feminist vocabulary was no longer rejected as absurd, "unnatural" or "irrational" (Rorty 1998a: 212); when feminists were understood as intelligible, was the outcome of re-educative<sup>112</sup> *feminist* "political struggle[s]" or "struggle[s] for recognition" (Wellmer 2001: 19). To reject this vocabulary after this point in history, could mean, for example, that one questions the values of these struggles. To use it, as Haack does, is to accept, implicitly, these struggles' values. Hence, Haack cannot justify her description of (the lack of) sexism in present-day academia without referring to feminist values.<sup>113</sup>

#### **iv) Tacit knowledge**

##### ***The not-possible clause***

A different question is whether all dimensions of feminist practices, scientific practices or other practices can be articulated in language and made available for discourse at all: Can all

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<sup>111</sup> "Most oppressors have had the wit to teach the oppressed a language in which the oppressed will sound crazy – *even to themselves* – if they describe themselves *as* oppressed" (original emphasis, Rorty 1998: 203).

<sup>112</sup> "Arguments may win acceptance after some process of re-education of male chauvinists" (Wellmer 2001: 19).

<sup>113</sup> See also 2.2.2 and the discussion of value-laden concepts and distinctions in factual propositions.

dimensions of human practices be deliberated upon in argumentation?<sup>114</sup> Skirbekk (2001) notes that participation in several practices presupposes tacit knowledge. Kjell S. Johannessen gives the requirement of tacit knowledge a logical status: “Tacit knowledge is knowledge which, for logical reasons, cannot be adequately articulated” (1997: 208): “The adequate use of pieces of language, and the appropriate response to it, requires a situational understanding and a judgmental power which by far transcends what can be derived from the meaning immanent in the sentence alone” (op.cit.: 214).<sup>115</sup> Why is tacit knowledge a precondition, even a logical precondition, for propositional knowledge?

Johannessen, Haack and Apel’s objects of analysis are the propositions of “natural language”; the actual situations of language use (Apel 1994b: 176). Questions of validity are asked language-users in actual situations of language-use. Someone might ask Haack, for example, what foundherentism means (i.e. ask her a question of intelligibility). Haack’s answer would probably be a more or less elaborated definition of foundherentism. A brief one might be: Foundherentism is a set of criteria for theoretical justification emphasizing that justified theories are those supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence. If Haack was asked to advance her definition, she might, referring to *Evidence and Inquiry*, provide a more detailed set of rules for foundherentist inquiry. It is not possible, however, to articulate fully how these rules should be applied in specific cases,<sup>116</sup> there is a logical “not possible-clause” attached to this endeavor (Johannessen 1997: 208):

The idea is simple, but indeed basic. [...] a definition or the expression of a rule cannot itself determine how it is to be applied, as it can be interpreted in various ways. From this it follows

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<sup>114</sup> Haack seems herself to doubt this (see 2.2.1).

<sup>115</sup> Tacit knowledge can be conceptualized as a burden of judgment: It is a source of disagreement between reasonable persons (see 2.2.2).

<sup>116</sup> For pragmatists, it is essential to address this problem connected with practical application. Pragmatists do not deny that it is possible to stick to the rules; to the “formalized semantic systems” (Apel 1994b: 176). But at a devastating cost: Disregarding the application of rules in actual use-situations, “holds no promise whatsoever when it is a question of understanding the nature of natural languages and how they are related to reality” (Johannessen 1997: 211). Accordingly, the logical contradiction of reducing rule-application to rule-following is a logical contradiction on the pragmatic level of language performance. But is it also a performative self-contradiction in Apel’s sense (see Chapter 7)? Not all logical contradictions on the level of performance are performative self-contradictions. You could say during a conversation that there is sexism at your place of work, and that there is not sexism at your place of work, and you would contradict yourself, but the contradiction is between two truth-claims you raise, not “zwischen dem *Inhalt einer Proposition* und dem *selbstbezüglichen – impliziten oder performativ expliziten – intentionalen Inhalt des Aktes des Vorbringens der Proposition* im Rahmen eines argumentativen Diskurses” (original emphasis, Apel 1996: 22). The claim ‘I apply rules by following other rules’ is not clear-cut. The contradiction involved seems to be one between the content of a proposition (“zwischen dem Inhalt einer Proposition”) on the one hand, and practical application in lifeworld contexts on the other (not between the content of a proposition and the constitutive basis of argumentative discourse). Hence, it seems to be a performative self-contradiction, but not in Apel’s sense. This highlights that there are different kinds of “arguments from absurdity” (Skirbekk 1992a).

that there can be no point in formulating a new rule that lays down how the first is to be applied. For then the same problem will arise once more in connection with the expression of the new rule. It, again, can be taken or understood in various ways. And this will go on *ad infinitum* if we try to escape from the tangle by this route. [...] At one stage there thus have to be cases of rule-application which are not determined by other rules (op.cit.: 223).

How, then, do we go about when applying rules, when adequate rule-application necessarily requires more than rule-following? We have to rely to a certain extent on the situational “intransitive understanding” and our tacit “judgmental power” (op.cit.: 211). Tacit knowledge can be cultivated, for example, through practical experience (with other similar, but never identical cases), and through the study of paradigmatic<sup>117</sup> examples. The “discretionary component” in our knowledge which we are talking about here, can, however, not be scrutinized in discourse (Johannessen 1997: 208). In contrast to what, for example, Apel seems to presuppose in his approach to the relationship between lifeworld and discourse,<sup>118</sup> there is an irreducible tacit dimension to lifeworld “contexts of action” (Habermas 1984: 143); a part of our “background” knowledge is not available for scrutiny in discourse (ibid.: 145).

What are the implications of Johannessen’s not-possible clause? And in particular, what are the implications of this clause for the assessment of Haack’s argument for value-freedom? Johannessen’s clause does not imply that our situational judgment stands only on inevitably tacit ground. There is a part of “the discretionary component” in our knowledge which is inevitably tacit (Johannessen 1997: 208), but also a part which can be articulated and deliberated upon in discourse: How we apply a rule cannot be decisively determined by expressing other rules, but application of a rule may be regulated more precisely by introducing other, more precise rules.<sup>119</sup> Moreover, tacit knowledge is not beyond assessment, even if it cannot be assessed in discourse. As suggested, there are non-discursive ways of improving it. Also, the practical effects of tacit knowledge can be assessed in discourse. Thus, the relationship between what can be done before rule-application, and what can be done after

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<sup>117</sup> Johannessen includes Thomas Kuhn among the predecessors of his tacit knowledge-perspective (together with, among others, Aristotle and Wittgenstein). The tacit dimension of scientific practice has been a central topic of elaboration also in recent contributions. Although many of these contributions should be considered, primarily, descriptive accounts of science-in-practice, they also seem to contain more or less implicit prescriptions: The idea of good science is connected to a notion of adequate use of tacit knowledge (Molander 1993, Nydal 2002).

<sup>118</sup> Dietrich Böhler sums up Apel’s approach to the relationship between discourse and practice as follows: “Keine Praxis ohne möglichen, für ihren Sinn und ihr Geltenkönnen konstitutiven, Begleitsdiskurs. Bei diesem Schonvermitteltsein von Diskurs und Handlung, [...] setzt die Transzendentalpragmatik an” (2003a: 8). That there might be a dimension to practice that is not available for discourse is not considered.

<sup>119</sup> This important point is nearly lost in Johannessen’s outline of discretion.

is asymmetrical. Afterwards, the validity of our tacit knowledge can be assessed discursively, through the assessment of its practical effects.

### *Tacit values*

The question is whether tacit knowledge is value-free, and if not, whether it is possible to cultivate tacit knowledge into a value-free stock (if such knowledge is not essentially value-free). Haack, aware of the need for discretion; the use of good judgment, in theoretical justification, prescribes it, in an inconsistent move, to take into account the significant questions that inspire the investigations. However, let us say she did not make this move, prescribed our situational judgment in processes of justification to be value-neutral, and agreed to the distinction proposed here, between a discursively available and a tacit dimension to such judgments. How would she approach the tacit dimension? Are intransitive understandings value-free, or, if not, can they be made to be so?

One could try and argue from an ontological or metaphysical point of view that tacit knowledge is beyond value considerations; that warrant of tacit knowledge is not an ontic question of validity.<sup>120</sup> This presupposition is, however, questionable. Some argue that ontological or metaphysical knowledge is also value-laden knowledge.<sup>121</sup> But more importantly: If tacit knowledge is beyond questions of validity, it is also beyond the ontic scope of the crossword puzzle model of inquiry (which is based on the idea that the aim of inquiry is to end up with valid theories). Another way of arguing for the value-freedom of intransitive understandings would be to say that such understandings are not simply value-free (because they are ontological or metaphysical and so beyond value considerations), but that they can be made more warranted, through cultivation of our situational judgment, to be so. But how would we proceed as inquirers if our goal was to free our tacit knowledge from any value affiliation? I have suggested two ways in which tacit knowledge can be cultivated:

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<sup>120</sup> See Ernst Tugendhat's (1994) discussion of Heidegger's distinction between the ontic and the ontological.

<sup>121</sup> Consider for example Hans Jonas' attempt to anchor "Sollen" in "Sein" (Böhler 2003b: 4): "To ground the good or value in being is to bridge the alleged chasm between is and ought" (Jonas 1984: 79). Another option might be to anchor the move beyond value consideration in phenomenology or a philosophical anthropology; to talk about tacit knowledge as having a phenomenological or anthropological status different from the status of validity-claims. This move is, however, also questionable. Consider, for example, Axel Honneth's (1996) anthropological-phenomenological justification of an ethics of intersubjective recognition. A different question is whether Jonas and Honneth justificatory endeavors are successful. Elsewhere I have argued that Honneth's attempts to bridge the chasm between 'is' and 'ought' rests on a naturalistic fallacy and controversial ideas of human perfection (see Holst 2004b).

through practical experience and through studies of paradigmatic examples.<sup>122</sup> It might be argued, that our tacit knowledge would gradually be freed from its value affiliations as we made our inquiries in concrete cases,<sup>123</sup> faithful to the guidelines of value-free inquiry and inspired by our study of paradigmatic attempts to apply such guidelines.

It is, however, hard to see how this could come about. First, Haack's guidelines of value-free inquiry cannot be successfully applied. Hence, if we as inquirers try to rely on the value-free parts of our tacit stock of knowledge only (in the spirit of Haack), we can neither be guided by paradigmatic examples (because there are none) nor by our own practical experience with value-free inquiry (because we have none). Our tacit knowledge, in other words, can be cultivated, but not into a value-free stock, because we have no experience of such cultivation (for logical reasons). Second, if, hypothetically, Haack's argument for value-freedom had been valid, and we could rely on it with success, we would never be in a position, because of the not-possible clause, to conclude that our knowledge was a value-free stock anyway, because we could not scrutinize the tacit aspects of this knowledge in discourse. We could not say for sure that these aspects were value-laden, just as we could not guarantee that they were not. The problem with Haack's argument for value-freedom from this perspective is, thus, that we cannot have valid knowledge warranted in discourse of whether the tacit aspects of our knowledge are value-free or not. Haack's argument prescribes inquirers us to make sure of something they cannot make sure of.<sup>124</sup>

### ***Confirmation or truth?***

The phenomenon of tacit knowledge might also shed light on a recent debate between Longino and Kitcher on whether (significant) confirmation or (significant) truth should be the goal of scientific inquiry (Longino 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, Kitcher 2002). Longino

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<sup>122</sup> There may be more ways. The important thing here is that there is a not-possible clause concerning discursive cultivation of tacit knowledge.

<sup>123</sup> And made corrections in our procedures from one case to next, based on the *post factum* discourse on the practical effects of our situational judgments, if this discursive scrutiny showed that we in our procedures had in fact presupposed certain values.

<sup>124</sup> I do not contest Haack's claim that knowledge is fallible. And fallibilism implies that we simply do not know for sure whether our theories (tacit or not) are true or right; we have no guarantees. However, if the validity-claims involved in our theoretical proposals are scrutinized in discourse, and if they, after scrutiny, are not refuted, this indicates that the proposals may be true (or false), right (or wrong), even if these are fallible assessments. In the case of non-discursive tacit knowledge, even fallibilism (in this sense) is not an option.



[...] propose[s] to treat confirmation as a general term for a family of epistemological success concepts including truth, but also isomorphism, homomorphism, similarity, fit, alignment, and other such notions (2002a: 117).

She prefers confirmation to truth because

[...] using true and false as the primary dimensions of evaluation [...] limit candidate representations to the sort of thing that can be true or false – linguistic entities like propositions or assertions (op.cit.: 113).

Many “scientific theories of a phenomenon” are, however, better understood as “models of the phenomenon”, than as “a set of propositions of the phenomenon” (ibid.). And a model “is neither true nor false: Instead, its structure, or the structure of the subset of its elements, may be identical to a structure in the world” (op.cit.: 114). In these cases, when we are confronted with theories as models, notions such as “isomorphism, homomorphism, similarity, fit [and] alignment” are better indicators of “epistemological success” (op.cit.: 117), because these notions are more suitable for the evaluation of the “visual, nonlinguistic representations” which models are (op.cit.: 115).

Kitcher argues that Longino exaggerates the challenge from scientific model-based theories:

[...] instead of saying that one of the aims of science is to adopt models that fit the world in appropriate respects to appropriate degrees, we might suggest that among the statements science aims to accept is a class describing this kind of fit. [...] Of course there would still be the challenge of assimilating the accuracy of visual representations to some notion (or close analogue) of truth, but it may well be possible to meet the challenge (2002: 555).

Both Longino and Kitcher make reasonable points. “[S]tatements” about how models “fit the world” can be scrutinized in discourse, as Kitcher argues (ibid.). In genuine inquiry such statements should be scrutinized as thoroughly as possible. Longino are right, however, both in pointing out the important role of models<sup>125</sup> and visual representations in inquiry, and in her emphasis on the possible non-discursive aspects of models and such representations. Because not only are models and visual representations crucial didactic tools in communication; they may also be a way to communicate tacit knowledge that cannot be reduced to “linguistic entities like propositions or assertions” (Longino 2002a: 113). Thus,

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<sup>125</sup> Models should be understood in a wide sense, not only as we know them from biology, economics or other disciplines conventionally figured as model-based. In the human and social sciences, narratives, metaphors or other symbolic expressions might be regarded as models in the sense conceived here.

because of the not-possible clause, Kitcher will never fully succeed in meeting the “challenge” of “assimilating” all he knows into a discursive framework (2002: 555). Also for this reason Kitcher’s argument for value-freedom<sup>126</sup> is invalid.

#### v) Truth and justification

Generally speaking, Longino’s argument that “confirmation” should replace “truth” as an indicator of “epistemological success”, is, however, unconvincing (2002a: 117).<sup>127</sup> It is correct that “truth *as correspondence* [...] does not seem to express the kind of success that is intended in talk of scientific knowledge” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 113). Longino regards Peirce as a philosophical “predecessor” (2002a: 3-5). Peirce’s theory of truth presents, however, an alternative to correspondence theories. As noted by Apel:

[...] it is not the *real* (in itself), as it is conceived in a metaphysical correspondence-theory as independent of our thought in general or, more precisely, of the possible redemption (discursive settlement) of our truth-claims, that can serve as a transcendent criterion or standard of truth, but rather the ultimate *consensus omnium* that would necessarily constitute the correlate of the real, as it can be meaningfully thought of as that which would hold in the long run (original emphasis, 1994b: 192).

The question is, however, why this *consensus omnium* should be regarded as true, and not only as justified. Why not agree with Rorty, against “Apel and Habermas”, but also against Haack, that “Peirce was right in telling us to talk about discourse rather than about consciousness,” yet maintain that “the *only* ideal presupposed by discourse is that of being able to justify your beliefs to a *competent* audience” (original emphasis, Rorty 2000: 9)? Or in terms of Haack’s crossword model of inquiry: Why is the theory that is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence most probably true? Is it not simply the set of beliefs that are best justified?

In some passages, Haack classifies “to believe p is to accept p as true” simply as a truism or a tautology (Haack 1993: 192, 1998: 189). She makes ‘accepting p as true’ the definition of ‘believing p’. This makes ‘to believe p is to accept p as true’ a necessarily true analytic statement. This argument will, however, only convince those who are already convinced that this is how ‘believing p’ should be understood, not those (among others Rorty) who question

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<sup>126</sup> Similar to Haack’s argument.

<sup>127</sup> Longino herself is ambivalent on this point, because she also says (in the above quotation) that “linguistic entities like propositions or assertions” are “the sort of thing that can be true or false” (2002a: 113).

this understanding. Haack does not spell out why defining ‘believing p’ as ‘believing p to be true’ is more reasonable than a definition that does not refer to truth.

In other passages Haack describes truth as “the internal goal” of believing (1998: 16); “if you aren’t trying to find out the truth about whatever-it-is, you aren’t really inquiring” (op.cit.: 189). How is this to be understood? Apel explicates the connection between beliefs and truth, or rather, between justified beliefs<sup>128</sup> and truth, as an internal pragmatic connection. He distinguishes sharply between any real justified but fallible *consensus omnium* and the ultimate, infallible *consensus omnium* of an “ideal communication community” (2001: 2). The latter is, he suggests, “a regulative idea” that is “counterfactually” anticipated in our argumentative practices (op.cit.: 7):

For this idea of reason (“Vernunftidee” in Kant’s sense), on the one hand, in its *counterfactual anticipation* of what would be the end of the discourse of research, corresponds to the undeniable implicit postulate of each truth-claim proposed in a discourse – the postulate of being *intersubjectively* valid on a *universal* scale, that is, of being acceptable as an uncriticizable consensus, yet, on the other hand, it supposes from the outset that, with regard to *reality as a whole*, no *factual* consensus in space and time can definitely correspond to the expectation connected with the truth-claim (original emphasis, *ibid.*)

Hence, the ultimate *consensus omnium* has the status of an undeniable “transcendental-pragmatic presupposition” (op.cit.: 12), undeniable because we as participants in discourse always already presuppose it. There are “presuppositions of serious argumentation” that are “non-circumventable by reflection”, that we cannot deny without being involved in a performative self-contradiction (*ibid.*).<sup>129</sup> If we claim, for example, that something is the case, we claim at the same time, implicitly, that it can be justified as true.<sup>130</sup> If we deny that it can be justified as true, and claim, as Rorty does, that “justification is relative to audience” or to “context” (Rorty 1998a: 21), we either do not participate in serious argumentation (and no further discussion is needed), or we deny what we presuppose<sup>131</sup> when we claim that something is the case.

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<sup>128</sup> Even Rorty accepts the connection between what we believe in and what we find justified.

<sup>129</sup> A contradiction “zwischen dem *Inhalt einer Proposition* und dem *selbstbezüglichen* – impliziten oder performativ expliziten – *intentionalen Inhalt des Aktes des Vorbringens der Proposition* im Rahmen eines argumentativen Diskurses” (original emphasis, Apel 1996: 22).

<sup>130</sup> Consider also Apel’s outline of “Verstehen” as understanding the meaning of and as agreeing on validity-claims (see 2.3.1).

<sup>131</sup> The question is whether such presuppositions are transcendental-pragmatic, as argued by Apel. Wellmer also argues that we assume, when we argue in a “committed” way, “unavoidable idealizing presuppositions about speaking and arguing” (original emphasis, 1993: 169). Wellmer considers it, however, misleading to present these presuppositions in transcendental-pragmatic terms; as a “regulative idea of an *ideal communication*

Does it matter for the assessment of the argument for value-freedom if an internal pragmatic relationship between justified beliefs and truth can be established, as Apel suggests? Rorty considers the aim of inquiry to be to end up with theories that are justified relative to context, not theories that are more or less true in a context-transcending sense. With this point of departure, one could prescribe value-freedom in theoretical justification, i.e. one could try to argue that theoretical justification, even if always context-relative and not truth-indicative, could be made without reference to values.<sup>132</sup> This version of the argument for value-freedom seems, however, to be even more difficult to defend than Haack's version. In Haack's argument premise 2) is: Whether a theory is justified depends only on features indicative of its truth, not its significance. In this version of the argument, premise 2) would be: Whether a theory is justified depends only on features indicative of its justification, not on its significance or on the value-laden aspects of the context to which the justification is relative to. Thus, according to this version of the premise, anyone asserting that a theory is justified, presupposes that it can be justified that the value-laden aspects of the context to which justification is relative are not referred to. But how could this be justified? According to Rorty's notion of justification: in a process of justification relative to context, which, in accordance with the argument for value-freedom, does not refer to the value-laden aspects of the context to which justification is relative. That justification does not refer to the value-

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*community*, i.e. [...] [as] an unlimited community of interpretation and interaction which simultaneously represents an ideal ultimate goal of understanding, the realization of which would be identical in meaning with the abolition of all obstacles to communication" (original emphasis, op.cit.: 173). He regards this idea as fundamentally "post-hermeneutic"; it presupposes "a language which has emancipated itself from the conditions of the hermeneutic mediation of meaning", in a "state of perfect understanding and agreement" (op.cit. 173-175): "The ideal communication community would have passed beyond error, dissent, non-understanding and conflict, but only at the price of freezing language, of the extinction of its productive energies, and thus of suspending the very linguistic and historical life-form of humanity" (op.cit.: 176). Wellmer considers instead the "idealizing presuppositions about speaking and arguing" to be "performative idealizations" (op.cit.: 169): "Whenever we raise a truth-claim on the basis of what we take to be good arguments or compelling evidence we take the epistemic conditions prevailing here and now to be ideal in the sense that we presuppose that no arguments or evidence that would put our truth claim in doubt will come up in the future" (1998: 142). This is not to deny that "as soon as we *reflect* upon our practice of truth-oriented communication and discourse we must, of course, grant that we can never exclude the possibility that new arguments or new experiences may force us to revise our truth-claims" (original emphasis, *ibid.*). On the latter point Wellmer and Apel are in agreement: Validity-claims are fallible. Wellmer adds, however: "This reflective awareness of the fallibility of our truth-claims might [...] also be understood as an awareness, that what we *take* to be epistemically ideal conditions might turn out not to be ideal conditions after all" (original emphasis, *ibid.*). The performative idealizations we presuppose when we speak and act are also fallible, according to Wellmer. This is, however, to defend a principle of generalized fallibilism, which is to commit a performative self-contradiction. Wellmer tends, furthermore, to present the regulative idea of an ideal communication community as "an imaginable state of things within human history but representing an eschatological utopia, because all connections with the normal discourse situation of human beings would be negated" (Apel 2001: 8). This, however, "contradicts all provisions given by Kant in the context of his critical philosophy"; "the as if-objective of a *regulative idea* cannot be factually reached but only *approximated*" (original emphasis, op.cit.: 9).

<sup>132</sup> This is a hypothetical situation: Rorty does not defend value-free theoretical justification.

laden aspects of the context to which justification is relative, could, however, only be justified in a process of justification that did not refer to the value-laden aspects of the context to which justification is relative, and so on and so forth, indefinitely.

In other words, we cannot, relying on Rorty's notion of justification as relative to context, justify that theoretical justification does not refer to the value-laden aspects of the context to which theoretical justification is relative, in a way we can justify does not refer to values. If Rorty were right; if justification is relative to context, this would, then, be an additional argument against Haacks' argument for value-freedom. However, because there is an internal relationship between justifying something and justifying it as true, this is not a valid argument. Haack's argument for value-freedom is invalid, but not because the aim of inquiry is to end up with theories that are more or less justified relative to context (instead of theories that are more or less significantly true).

How would Haack respond to Apel's outline of the relationship between justifying something and justifying it as true? We can reasonably speculate. On the one hand, her epistemological reconstruction relies on Peirce's "transformation of transcendental philosophy" (Wellmer 1992: 170-174). This suggests a common ground between Haack and Apel. On the other hand, Haack seems in several passages to defend a generalized fallibilism, i.e. "our theories about the world and ourselves" and our thinking about such theories should be considered equally fallible; the reasons for accepting her epistemological reconstruction are "no less fallible than those parts of our theories about the world and ourselves with which they interlock" (1993: 222). To subscribe to a principle of generalized fallibilism<sup>133</sup> is, however, to subscribe to a principle that denies what is presupposed in the practice of subscribing, and thus, to commit a performative self-contradiction:

Now, it is clear that the *principle of fallibilism*, which certainly holds with regard to all empirical truth-claims, cannot without logical paradoxicalness be applied to itself and, furthermore, is not even *understandable*, without presupposing [...] non-questionable and, so to speak, *paradigmatic certainties*, [...] essentially identical with [...] [the] *presuppositions of serious argumentation* [...]. Now, these presuppositions [...], which are *non-circumventable by reflection* [...], include also the presupposition that the truth-claims of argumentation must be *claims to universal validity* and therefore must imply the claim for unrestricted *intersubjective consensus* with regard to their justifiability; and this idealized claim can no longer be

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<sup>133</sup> Also Rorty subscribes to a generalized fallibilism when he defends justification as justification relative to context, i.e. when he denies the internal relationship between justification and truth. Karl Popper and Hans Albert were, however, the original targets of Apel's critique of the principle of generalized fallibilism.

questioned and made relative by *the principle of fallibilism* since it is a transcendental-pragmatic presupposition of this very principle (original emphasis, Apel 2001: 12).

Hence, in her attempt to elaborate the relationship between ‘believing p’ and ‘accepting p as true’, Haack tends to become too analytical (in some passages the relationship is elaborated as a truism), and too synthetic (i.e. the presuppositions of argumentation are presented as being just as fallible as the validity-claims argued on).

## vi) The morality of truth

Apel argues, moreover, what Peirce only suggests:<sup>134</sup> that the regulative idea of an ideal communication community we presuppose in genuine truth-seeking has a moral content (Apel 1990: 80). In ideal argumentative discourse, assertions are justified by all “sufficiently competent or enlightened persons” as free and equal<sup>135</sup> (Wellmer 2001: 15): The constitutive conditions of language use; the constitutive “formal and processual properties of argumentation”, implies a moral norm of equal respect:

Whoever enters into discussion with the serious intention of becoming convinced of something through dialogue with others has to presume performatively that the participants allow their yes or no to be determined solely by the force of the better argument. [...] with this they assume – normally in a counterfactual way – a speech situation that satisfies improbable conditions: openness to the public, inclusiveness, equal rights to participation, immunization against external or inherent compulsion, as well as the participants’ orientation toward reaching understanding (Habermas 2000: 45, 46).<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> See Peirce (1990: 103-114).

<sup>135</sup> Wellmer’s outline of the truth-idealization as performative idealization resembles Apel’s outline of the truth-idealization as a transcendental-pragmatic regulative idea. Whereas Apel regards the moral underpinnings of this idealization as undeniable, Wellmer, regards them, however, as fallible: “It is obvious that the critique of foundationalism and of metaphysics that leads to the recognition of contingency [our reflective awareness of the fallibility of our validity claims and of our performative presuppositions] must affect our understanding of the democratic and liberal principles of modernity as well. For we can no longer assume that there is some Archimedean point – for example, the idea of reason – in which these principles might be grounded” (Wellmer 1998: 146). This does not mean that Wellmer would not defend such principles: “If only we abandon the idea of an ultimate foundation of democratic and liberal principles [...] – and if we allow experience, historical and other, to enter into argumentation, then there seems to be a rich network of arguments for supporting and critically developing democratic-liberal principles and institutions” (op.cit.: 151).

<sup>136</sup> Habermas and Apel outline the precise relationship between the properties of argumentation and morality differently (Habermas 1999, Apel 2003). In *Between Facts and Norms* (1999) Habermas describes the formal and processual properties of argumentation, explicated as a “discourse principle” as “morally neutral”, Apel sums up (2003: 17): “The ‘principle of morality’ (*Moralprinzip*) and the ‘principle of law’ (*Rechtsprinzip*) are now considered to emerge ‘equiprimordially (*gleichursprünglich*) with regard to the normative status from the morally neutral ‘discourse principle’ – analogously to their historical differentiation out of ‘*substantielle Sittlichkeit*’ (in the sense of Hegel)” (ibid.). Habermas comes thus close to Seyla Benhabib (1992) and Albrecht Wellmer’s (1998) elaboration of the relationship between discourse, morality and modernity. Apel considers rather the discourse principle to be a moral principle: “‘D’ [ist] Diskurs- und Moralprinzip” – it is both “Rationalitätskriterium, praktische Grundnorm und regulative Idee” (Böhler 2003a: 1).

“Formal and processual properties of argumentation”,<sup>137</sup> such as “openness to the public, inclusiveness, equal rights to participation, immunization against external and inherent compulsion, as well as the participants’ orientation toward reaching understanding” are properties with a moral content (op.cit.: 45, 46). To participate in serious argumentation is to take on an obligation<sup>138</sup> of treating all participants<sup>139</sup> with equal respect.<sup>140</sup>

Inspired by Peirce, Haack elaborates the justification of theories as a process whereby evidence is assessed relative to its truth-indicativeness in rational deliberation among inquirers. This process cannot, however, be conceptualized as value-free also for the reason highlighted here. When inquirers participate in committed deliberation, when they assert something seriously, they presuppose a *consensus omnium* with formal and processual properties with a moral content.<sup>141</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> Thus, striving towards the ideal communication community should be understood not so much as striving towards making our opinions approximately similar to the substantial Final Opinions of ideal post-humans in a post-historical, post-hermeneutical situation, as suggested by Wellmer. As human beings in history we cannot “imagine in the present what an approximately ideal” Final Opinion “would look like” (Habermas 2000: 45). “With regard to the argumentative presuppositions of general inclusiveness, equal rights to participation, freedom of repression, and orientation toward reaching understanding, we can [however] imagine in the present what an approximately ideal satisfaction would look like” (ibid.).

<sup>138</sup> That it can be reasonably argued that we are obliged to do something, i.e. that it can be reasonably argued that we cannot deny the moral content of the formal and processual properties of serious argumentation without committing a performative self-contradiction, does not imply that we in fact do it. The discussion on how the relationship between practical reason and motivation is to be understood precisely, is complex, and is not dealt with here (for an instructive overview, see Millgram (ed.) 2001).

<sup>139</sup> Iris Marion Young (1994) argues that this approach makes it difficult to argue for protection of the autonomy and integrity of those who cannot participate in discourse, for example the functionally disabled and children. Herlinde Pauer-Studer (1998) and Axel Honneth (2003) suggest something similar. For ways to handle this problem consider, however, Habermas (1993), Benhabib (1994) and O’Neill (1989, 1996).

<sup>140</sup> Dietrich Böhler, interpreting Apel, specifies the moral basis of argumentative dialogue in terms of four more specific promises (“Dialogversprechen”): “Eine Rolle im argumentativen Dialog zu übernehmen, also etwas zu verstehen geben und geltend machen zu wollen, das bedeutet, *vier vorgängige* – jeder Diskussion geltungsmässig zugrundeliegende – *Dialogversprechen* als verbindlich anerkannt zu haben. Indem ich Anderen überhaupt etwas zu verstehen gebe, was ich ihnen gegenüber geltende mache, habe ich *als* deren Dialogpartner – zumindest – viererlei versprochen: 1) die *nicht begrenzbare Gemeinschaft der möglichen Argumentationsteilnehmer* als letzte Sinn- und Gültigkeitsinstanz (selbst- und ergebniskritisch) im Auge zu behalten; 2) allen Anderen *gleiche Rechte* als Dialogpartner zuzuerkennen, was die unbedingte Achtung ihrer Lebens- und Freiheitsrechte einschliesst (so dass sich daraus die Menschenwürdenorm herleitet), 3) *selbstverantwortlich* für die eigenen Beiträge *im Diskurs* zu sein und *mitverantwortlich für den Diskurs als Möglichkeit der Verantwortung* jetzt und die Zukunft; *mitverantwortlich* für die – nur in situationsbezogenen, falliblen Diskursen mögliche – Ermittlung *und* die jeweils mögliche Gewährleistung von (menschens-)rechtlichen, ökologischen, sozialen, politischen etc. Realisierungsbedingungen öffentlicher Diskurse zu sein; 4) *mitverantwortlich* für die Verwirklichung der entsprechenden Diskursergebnisse in der alltagsweltlichen, politischen, gesellschaftlichen und kulturellen Praxisfeldern zu sein” (original emphasis, 2003a: 26). Thus, according to Böhler, these promises have a transcendental moral status. Another option would be to consider them, or some of them, not as inferred from transcendental morality, but rather as norms justified in actual fallible discourse (approaching the infallible ideal of argumentative discourse presupposed in such discourse), or as ethical-political prescriptions. I will return to these notions; transcendental morality, discursively justified morality, ethics and politics, and define them and their interrelations more accurately.

<sup>141</sup> Apel considers this to be a pragmatist reconstruction of Kant’s “Vernunftidee” (2001: 7). Consider in this connection Onora O’Neill’s outline of the connection between the Categorical Imperative as The Formula of the

### vii) Metaphysical realism

Haack defends realism. Her elaboration of realism is, however, inadequate in certain ways that make her doctrine of value-freedom appear more reasonable than it is. According to Apel, Peirce's argument for realism, does not rely on any recourse to Kantian "externalist (transcendent) metaphysics" (2001: 14) Truth-seeking can be elaborated as a process of interpreting perceptual evidence and ensuring coherence. The task of inquirers is to:

[...] ensure the *coherence* of existing theories or concepts, [...] [that] are based, at the same time, on a constant *extention* of the recognition of *empirical facts* by the account of *perceptual evidence* (which of course in perceptual judgments is always already *interpreted evidence*) (original emphasis, op.cit.: 22).

Apel criticizes Habermas for introducing "a justification-transcendent", "strictly non-epistemic", "metaphysical moment" when elaborating the truth-idealization; a "moment" that is not "covered *eo ipso* by the explication of terms of an unsurpassable (that is uncriticizable) justification by way of argumentation" (op.cit.: 14). This is, however, Apel argues, to re-introduce "the supposition of an *unknowable reality* in the sense of Kant's things in themselves [...] whose avoidance I supposed to be a common concern" (original emphasis, *ibid.*). Haack seems to do something similar. Her moderate naturalism; her elaboration of the causal aspect of justification, re-introduces a notion of things-in-themselves.<sup>142</sup> Consider how she explicates the process of perception: "In perception we are in contact with something real, *independent of our interpretations*, of how anybody thinks it to be" (my emphasis, Haack 1998: 161).<sup>143</sup>

What interests me here, is the possible connection between Haack's (after all) metaphysical notion of the real and her argument for value-freedom. If it was the case that a realist notion

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Universal Law and as the Formula of the End in Itself: "Act only on the maxim through which you can at the same time will that it be a universal law" and "Treat humanity in your own person or in the person of any other never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end" (1995: 177, 178). "Kant's contention is", she says, "that the principles we must adopt if we are not to use others will be the very principles of justice that were identified by considering which principles are universalizable for rational beings" (op.cit.: 179). This Kantian contention is the crux of Apel's project, i.e. to elaborate reasonably, given pragmatist presuppositions, the relationship between context-transcending rational argumentation and the Formula of the End in Itself.

<sup>142</sup> Despite her declared dismissal of Kantian metaphysics.

<sup>143</sup> Apel links Habermas' recent re-introduction of metaphysical realism when explicating the meaning of truth, to his recent re-interpretation of the ideal communication community as a fallible performative idealization, i.e. to his implicit reliance on a principle of generalized fallibilism. These two things also go together in Haack's case: When all is fallible, "our theories about the world and ourselves" as well as our "criteria of justification", metaphysical realism is re-introduced to save truth (1993: 222).



of things-in-themselves was needed in order to save the notion of truth, this would not necessarily imply that a notion of things-in-themselves was needed to save the notion of warranted values: The idealization we presuppose when claiming that something ‘is’, is not similar to the idealization we presuppose when making rightness-claims.<sup>144</sup> Moral realism is, moreover, a more controversial position than epistemological realism. Many moral philosophers have at least given up looking for what Elizabeth Anderson refers to as “evaluative facts”; facts “that enable us to discern the properties of good and bad in the world” (1993: 1).<sup>145</sup>

Haack dismisses the idea of evaluative facts. This dismissal, in combination with her general tendency to identify, misleadingly, ideal reason with what goes on in the ideal community of truth-seeking investigators, i.e. with theoretical reason, contributes to making her defense of value-freedom in theoretical justification appear to be the only logical option. If one dismisses moral realism and believes that moral cognitivism, approaching ought-questions in a rational way,<sup>146</sup> implies a defense of moral realism (because one identifies ideal reason with theoretical reason, and believes a defense of theoretical reason implies defending an idea of things-in-themselves), it would be inconsistent to defend moral cognitivism. Haack defends, accordingly, a non-cognitivist approach to ought-questions: She considers values to be expressions of our subjective, unpredictable, irrational beliefs and desires.<sup>147</sup>

Her hostility towards feminist epistemologists and other defenders of value-laden justification, is intimately linked to this non-cognitivism. Value-laden justification means, in her view, allowing for subjective, unpredictable and irrational influences in the context of justification. Consequently, arguing successfully against Haack’s argument for value-freedom is intimately linked to making moral cognitivism into a viable option, which means, among other things, to make it consistent with a dismissal of metaphysical ideas of evaluative facts.

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<sup>144</sup> See 2.4.3.

<sup>145</sup> It is illustrative that Habermas’ does not introduce a justification-transcendent moment in moral discourse. There are, however, also defenders of a moral-realist interpretation of discourse ethics, such as Christina Lafont (2004).

<sup>146</sup> Joseph Heath notes that moral cognitivism “in the Anglo-American tradition” refers to the idea that “moral statements have truth-values”, while Habermas with moral cognitivism refers to the idea that norms can be “rationally justified” (2001: 179). Here the term is used in Habermas’ sense.

<sup>147</sup> See 2.4.1.

Moral cognitivism can be defended, even if the idea of evaluative facts is indefensible, because moral cognitivism does not depend on this idea.<sup>148</sup> This would be the case also if truth had needed a defense of metaphysical realism, in order to be saved (but this is not the case), because the truth-idealization and the rightness-idealization are not identical, i.e. practical reason cannot be reduced to theoretical reason.

## **2.4 Assessing the fourth premise<sup>149</sup>**

### **2.4.1 Haack's notion of values as subjective wishes or desires**

Generally speaking, Haack outlines ought-questions as questions of what we consider “desirable” and “deplorable” (1998: 129). Values express our subjective, unpredictable, irrational wishes or desires. This elaboration differs significantly from her elaboration of truth-questions. Genuine truth-seeking, is defined as seeking answers to questions of state of affairs warranted in rational intersubjective processes of deliberation. Truth is explicated as the outcome of critical communication in a community of inquirers.

Haack's crossword puzzle model of inquiry has, however, an implicit subjectivist subtext: Her attempt to elaborate truth-seeking as an intersubjective practice is half-hearted. She explicates, for example, the process in which perceptions are interpreted as a monological process. Meaning is presented, not as intersubjective, dialogically constituted meaning, but as something separate subjects attribute to what they perceive when they do their investigations (see Haack 1993: 74, 1998: 161). Moreover, her justification of why genuine inquiry is an intersubjective endeavor is primarily instrumentalist. She considers “a real community of imperfect inquirers” to be “a tolerable ersatz of an ideal community”, because “individual idiosyncracies or weaknesses may compensate for each other” in a community, and so make the outcome of inquiry more balanced (1998: 97-98). Understanding (qua precondition for communication and investigation) should, however, be conceived as essentially intersubjective. Understanding is established among fellow subjects, not privately (Apel 1994a: 26). This is the primary reason why inquiry should be regarded as a communal practice (because it always already is). Thus, Haack's approach to values and her notion of

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<sup>148</sup> See 2.4.1.

<sup>149</sup> Values express subjective wishes or desires.

truth-seeking have, after all, a problematic subjectivism in common, even if, in the latter case, subjectivism is the subtext and not the explicated position.

Haack's subjectivist approach to values is embedded in a rational-choice theory of action. Haack's rational-choice theory may be criticized from several points of view,<sup>150</sup> depending on what kind of theory it is considered to be. Considered as a general empirical theory about human nature and action it is unwarranted.<sup>151</sup> People's values are shaped in intersubjective processes of interpretation and communication, and they are historically and institutionally structured (they are not simply subjective). They may reflect a manifold of concerns (they do not necessarily reflect egoistic concerns), they can be reasonably deliberated upon (they are not simply desires, wishes or inclinations), i.e. we do not regard them simply as given goals, beyond scrutiny, and we do not always go about attempting to maximize their fulfillment; we are not simply strategic actors maximizing goal-fulfillment. Considered as a normative theory about how people ought to behave, prescribing us to behave as strategic egoists, Haack's rational-choice theory is indefensible: The prescription is incompatible with treating all with equal respect (and not simply as means, if this maximizes goal-fulfillment). Considered as an idealization; if she has "decide[d] to interpret" people's choices and actions as if her rational-choice theory of action were correct, it "fails" as "explanation" of what in fact is going on (Anderson 2002: 371).<sup>152</sup>

Haack seems to consider her rational-choice theory of action as an empirical theory (not as an idealization). This idea of how people in fact behave, feeds her commitment to value-

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<sup>150</sup> I will make a few brief points about the flaws of Haack's rational-choice theory. Thus, I will not deal systematically with the vast literature on rational-choice theory. This means that I will not discuss developments of this theory that might be more sophisticated and defensible than Haack's elaboration.

<sup>151</sup> "This is a problem internal to the research program of rational-choice theory. Most rational-choice theorists talk as if it were a purely empirical theory of human behavior. It is supposed to provide the [...] microfoundation of economic theory. Academics engaged in the imperialist project of extending the theory to extra-economic domains [...] regard the theory as universally true [...]. The trouble with the empirical, microfoundational interpretation of the theory is that it has been massively falsified" (Anderson 2002: 370-371). One response to this problem has been to interpret rational-choice theory as conceptually true: "Ludwig van Miese argued that the theory is a priori true, because all action is necessarily rational when viewed from the standpoint of the agents themselves" (op.cit.: 371). However, rational-choice theory cannot be the "inevitable framework of practical reasoning", since we are able "to imagine an alternative system of rational principles", as outlined, for example, in "Kantian theory" (ibid.).

<sup>152</sup> "We can, of course, *decide* to interpret people's choices *as if* they were always the product of some imagined set of consistent beliefs and desires. This is how a self-conscious behaviorist must see the theory, as 'revealed-preference-theory' does. But this decision comes at two costs. First, the preferences we impute to people may not correspond to what they actually care about [...]. The theory thus fails as a psychological explanation. Second, the behavioristic, tautological interpretation fails as a causal explanation, since it does not offer any account of underlying causes (real beliefs and desires) at all" (original emphasis, Anderson 2002: 371).

freedom: To allow values to influence theoretical justification, is, given her assumption that her rational-choice theory is a valid empirical theory, to allow for theoretical justification to be shaped by the idiosyncratic, arbitrary, subjective inclinations of egoistic natures. Haack regards “value judgments” as “essentially matters of blind, overbearing assertion, not subject to critical scrutiny or revision in light of arguments” (Anderson 1995: 35).<sup>153</sup> This view is, as suggested, misleading. First, there is empirical evidence that people in fact make their values “subject to critical scrutiny or revision in light of argument” (ibid.).<sup>154</sup> Second, when people fail to do so, when they do not make their values into topics of argument when asked by their fellow subjects to do so, this is because people lack the motivation to be rational; because of weakness of will, or because institutions insufficiently motivate them to be rational, not because it is conceptually<sup>155</sup> impossible to defend a rational approach to ought-questions.<sup>156</sup> In other words, Haack might still want to uphold her argument for value-freedom, but a valid argument for doing so is not that “to subordinate [...] objective truth-seeking” to values, is to give in “to any subjective preference or inclination or any expediency or opportunistic consideration”, that “befog[s]” our minds (Haack 1998: 7).

A less straightforward question is whether Haack conceives of her rational-choice theory as a normative theory about how people ought to behave. In some passages it seems as though she does; when she assumes that people behave egoistically and strategically, “human nature being what it is” (op.cit.: 12). This is either a defense of a naturalistic approach to values, or a normative defense of her rational-choice theory; she is saying that this is how people ought to behave in order not to contradict their nature. Both options are indefensible. Naturalist

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<sup>153</sup> According to Anderson, Haack’s notion of “value judgments” represents a “primitive emotivist view [...] no serious moral theorist accepts [...] anymore” (1995a: 35). There are, however, I believe, many who are not moral theorists that would subscribe to such a view. There are also several moral theorists that defend a more sophisticated emotivist view, such as Anette Baier. Consider Rorty’s reliance on Baier’s notion of sentimental education in his critique of moral universalism (see Chapter 7).

<sup>154</sup> The empirical evidence is significant. One illustrative example is Anderson’s empirical critique of Kristin Luker’s classic study of women’s decisions about their sexuality and contraceptive use from a rational-choice perspective (Anderson 2002: 379-389).

<sup>155</sup> Consider my earlier note, where Anderson refutes Ludwig van Miese’s conceptual argument for equating practical reason with the rational-choice-theoretical notion of reason, which is a version of reducing reason to theoretical reason. Consider also Christine Korsgaard’s refutation of the view that the fact that reasons fail to motivate us is an argument for skepticism about practical reason: “To the extent that skepticism about pure practical reason is based on the requirement that reasons be capable of motivating us, the correct response is that if someone discovers what are recognizably reasons bearing on conduct and those reasons fail to motivate us, that only shows the limits of our rationality. Motivational skepticism about practical reason depends on, and cannot be the basis of, skepticism about the possible content of rational requirements. The extent to which people are actually moved by rational considerations, either in their conduct or in their credence, is beyond the purview of philosophy. Philosophy can at most tell us what it would be like to be rational” (2001: 122).

<sup>156</sup> I initiated such a defense in 2.1.3. I will advance it in a moment.

approaches to values rest either on an idea of evaluative facts or on the idea that ‘ought’ can be derived from ‘is’.<sup>157</sup> Haack’s rational-choice theory as a normative theory is incompatible with the norm of treating all with equal respect (and not simply as means, if this maximizes goal-fulfillment).

In other passages Haack does not seem to defend rational-choice theory as a normative theory, however. Inquirers, for example, are in her view, to be “blamed” if they give in to wishes or desires when justifying theories: They “can be held responsible” (op.cit.: 15). This notion of responsibility is incompatible with a naturalistic approach to values. It is also incompatible with defending Haack’s rational-choice theory as a normative theory. “Human nature being what it is” (op.cit.: 12); so long as we are beings egoistically and strategically striving for “utility”, “fame and fortune”, why should we be blamed if we pursue pseudo-inquiry, if this, let’s say, makes us rich and famous – and why should we deserve “honor” and “praise” if we were to pursue genuine inquiry, if this, let’s say, did not in fact serve our selfish interests (op.cit.: 8,9,15)? Probably, according to Haack, because genuine inquiry is crucial for the long-term survival of the human species. This response requires, however, a more sophisticated rational-choice theory of action than she provides; a theory elaborating the relationship between our subjective wishes or desires and our objective long-term interests as a species. Moreover, Haack embeds her evolutionary argument for making genuine inquiry in a strong moral vocabulary, talking about blame, praise and honor: When inquirers are led astray by their wishes and desires, they are not simply behaving unwisely strategically. In order to express this view, she is, however, forced to introduce a moral vocabulary which her rational-choice theory cannot provide.

#### **2.4.2 Haack’s notion of values as virtues**

In addition to her notion of values as subjective wishes or desires, Haack introduces a notion of values as virtues, and a notion of values as moral standards. The role she prescribes for values as virtues in inquiry, is, however, incompatible with her defense of value-free theoretical justification. Value-free theoretical justification is, Haack says, something that a “decent” academic and a “good” person pursues (op.cit.: 14, 15), i.e. inquirers subscribing to her doctrine of value-freedom have “intellectual integrity”, and intellectual integrity is a

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<sup>157</sup> On a naturalistic fallacy.

“moral” virtue (not only an “instrumental” and an “epistemological” virtue) (op.cit.: 13). Hence, value-free theoretical justification is virtue-laden theoretical justification, and therefore is not, because the virtues in question are also moral virtues, value-free theoretical justification after all.<sup>158</sup>

Virtues may be conceptualized as practice-immanent; as the internal goals of our practices (MacIntyre 1984: 181: 255). Haack’s notion of virtues is, however, equal to the Homeric notion; her virtues are the virtues of a “heroic society” (op.cit.: 121-130). Scientific virtues are outlined as dispositions which the heroic individual scientist is herself responsible for cultivating. Haack admits, however, that the cultivation of individual virtues depends on “an environment that encourages it” (1998: 11). She mentions the significance of establishing incentive structures; structures that rewards “the egos” of scientists when they are virtuous (op.cit.: 12). The scientific ethos,<sup>159</sup> the institutionalized norms that regulate interaction, decisions and procedures of science, must not, however, reduce scientists to strategic egoists. The norms of the scientific institution should be truth-functional,<sup>160</sup> but also compatible with the norm of equal respect: They should be “norms of civility” (Anderson 1995a: 199).<sup>161</sup>

### **2.4.3 Haack’s notion of values as moral standards**

The moral content of the ideal speech community, inherent in its “formal and processual properties”, is, as elaborated by Habermas, “general inclusiveness, equal rights to participation, freedom of repression, and orientation toward reaching understanding” (2000: 46). Haack’s statement that “freedom of thought and speech” are “important conditions for scientific inquiry to flourish”, may be interpreted as an implicit acknowledgment of the moral content of the rational argumentation of “flourishing” scientific inquiry (1998: 113). Haack does not, however, allow this and similar statements<sup>162</sup> to modify her argument for value-freedom. Besides, once more, her reflections are instrumental. Haack’s concern is what serves genuine inquiry. The connection between the norm of freedom of thought and speech and

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<sup>158</sup> Consider also the discussion of Longino’s feminist theoretical virtues.

<sup>159</sup> Consider Robert Merton’s proposal (1973). The scientific ethos should not, however, prescribe scientists to subscribe to a notion of value-free theoretical justification.

<sup>160</sup> Whether it is truth-functional to treat scientists as strategic egoists, is, among other things, a question of whether they in fact behave as strategic egoists (i.e. it is a question of whether Haack’s rational-choice theory is a valid empirical theory).

<sup>161</sup> See 2.4.5. An advanced proposal of scientific norms is Knut Erik Tranøy’s (1997).

<sup>162</sup> Consider Haack’s concern that “the possibility that inquiry by a madman bent on destroying the planet might succeed – and bring further inquiry to an end” (1998: 13).

genuine inquiry is, however, primarily performative: You cannot deny this norm, which is to deny the morality linked to rational argumentation, assumed when you deny it, without committing a performative self-contradiction.<sup>163</sup>

A general problem is that Haack does not outline what justifies turning certain values into general moral standards, i.e. into values that are not simply subjective wishes or desires. There are sketchy remarks, as when she links the “moral” and “justice” to a recognition of our “common humanity” (op.cit.: 123). How this should be understood in more specific terms, is, however, not clear. Moreover, her recognition of certain general moral standards which, in one way or another, can be inferred from our common humanity, does not spur her into modifying her argument for value-freedom. Her position is, generally speaking: Neither values as subjective wishes or desires, values as virtues, nor values as moral standards should, according to her general argument, play any role in the context of justification. What matters is exclusively the truth-indicativeness of evidence.

#### **2.4.4 The question of values in inquiry: A question beyond values**

Haack’s sketchy distinctions between different kind of values, needs to be advanced further, if her argument for value-freedom is to be adequately addressed.

The background consensus of the lifeworld can be disrupted when validity-claims implicit in our speech-acts are questioned. Discussing the role of values in inquiry is essentially a discussion of how to conceive of the relationship between questions of truth and questions of rightness, i.e. the relationship between “is” and “ought”, in Haack’s terms (op.cit.: 129). In her general argument, ought-questions are considered equivalent to questions about what our “values” are, which in turn are considered equivalent to questions of what we consider “good” and “bad”; “ethical or political questions” (op.cit.: 118, 119). In a discussions of values and inquiry, it is, however, essential to properly distinguish between what is ethically good and what is morally right; between “the good” and “the right”, the “comprehensive” and the

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<sup>163</sup> The norm of freedom of thought and speech is a transcendental-pragmatic “certainty” (Apel 2001: 12). And was it not a transcendental-pragmatic certainty is would still be a norm that one reasonably could regard as justified: It is a norm all would agree to in argumentative discourse.

“freestanding” (Rawls 1996, 1999), “values” and “norms”, “ethics” and “morality” (Habermas 1999).<sup>164</sup>

### **i) Truth and morality<sup>165</sup>**

When we assert that something is (true), we assume an idealization of context-transcending argumentation that we can approximate; a truth-idealization. When we assert that something is right, we assume an idealization of context-transcending argumentation that we can approximate; a rightness-idealization. The rightness-idealization is “analogous” to the truth-idealization (Habermas 2003: 229). There is an internal connection between justified beliefs and truth, whether we talk of empirical truth or moral (truth-analogous) rightness. In both cases

[t]o make a sincere assertion or to justify a belief would not be what it is if it were not connected with the understanding that the assertion or belief should be acceptable to any sufficiently competent or enlightened person (Wellmer 2001: 15).

When we claim that something is a moral ought (just as when we claim that something is the case), we claim at the same time that it can be justified as right (just as to claim that something is, is to claim that it is true), i.e. that it can be justified to all persons as free and equal in a context-transcending discourse. Furthermore, the regulative idea of an ideal communication community presupposed in committed moral discourse (just as in genuine truth-seeking) has a moral content; the formal and processual properties of argumentation implies a norm of equal respect.

The truth-idealization is, however, also distinct from the rightness-idealization: “Correct moral judgments owe their universal validity not to their corroboration by the objective world like true empirical judgments, but to rationally motivated recognition” (Habermas 2003: 231); their rational acceptability is independent of “states of affairs that are warranted by the world itself” (op.cit.: 224).<sup>166</sup> In Haack’s terms, whereas discursive justification of what ‘is’ can be

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<sup>164</sup> I thank readers who have had these distinctions on their mind from when I introduced Haack’s argument in Chapter 1, for their patience. The reason why they have not been introduced until now is that the elaborations of the premises in Haack’s argument for value-freedom have been discussed premise by premise. Discussing now her elaboration of premise 4), it is time to scrutinize her notion of values. Much of what is said in the following sections I have, however, already indicated in the previous discussions of this chapter.

<sup>165</sup> See also Chapter 7.

<sup>166</sup> This difference between the truth-idealization and the rightness-idealization may be the reason why Haack states, misleadingly, that “moral oughts” unlike “terms of epistemic appraisal” carry a “presupposition of voluntariness” (1998: 18, see Chapter 1).



conceptualized as an “interplay of causal and evaluative aspects”, discursive justification of what ought to be is a question of “evaluation” (1993: 4).

It should, on the one hand, be made a distinction between the moral norm of equal respect (and what may be inferred from it) that can be established through transcendental-pragmatic reflection, and fallible moral norms that are warranted as right, in serious argumentation approximating ideal conditions. On the other hand, what is established through transcendental-pragmatic reflection, can always be questioned. And if and when it is questioned, it must be justified in real discourse approximating ideal conditions. The real justification of morality will thus always depend on fallible processes of justification.<sup>167</sup>

How should genuine inquirers relate to moral questions when justifying theories? One option would be to dismiss theories with a moral dimension. However, even if we consider the sole aim of inquiry to be to end up with theories in which only truth-claims are raised, this is impossible because:<sup>168</sup>

- a) Our answers to is-questions, determine our answers to can-questions, which in turn influence our answers to ought-questions (since ought implies can, and cannot implies ought not).
- b) Theoretical virtues are virtues that may be more in accordance with certain moral norms than with others.
- c) Propositions about what ‘is’ may contain concepts, distinctions and vocabularies with a moral dimension.

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<sup>167</sup> Apel’s transcendental-pragmatic argument rests on a “Begründungstriade”: “Zuerst pragmatisch rekonstruieren, dann die Rekonstruktionsresultate einzeln in Frage stellen, schliesslich *im aktuellen Dialog* den Zweifel und uno actu die Validität des bezwifelten Resultats prüfen” (original emphasis, Böhler 2003a: 28). Hence, a defense of moral universalism is, contrary to what Chantal Mouffe (2000) has argued, internally connected to democratic dialogue on moral standards, i.e. to moral discourse – it is also for this reason not anti-democratic to argue for moral universalism (see also Chapters 6 and 9 on the relationship between democracy, the rule of law and morality). In addition citizens may of course participate in other discourses than moral discourses.

<sup>168</sup> This is a summing up of the arguments against Haack’s defense of theoretical justification free from ‘values’ qua *moral norms*, presented so far in this chapter.

d) The burden of judgment referred to as the burden of total experience may introduce morality in theoretical justification.

e) We do not know whether the tacit knowledge we need to rely on when assessing theories, has a moral dimension or not.

f) In discourse on what is true, we presuppose a discourse of an ideal communication community with a moral content.

The sole aim of genuine inquiry is, however, to end up with significantly true theories. Thus:

g) Even if a) to f) were not the case, the fact that the sole aim of genuine inquiry is to end up with theories that are significant, i.e. that are of interest to us, confronts the inquirer with moral questions. Questions of significance are questions of what we assess as significant, and such assessments are attached to morality.

a) to g) imply that theoretical justification is influenced by moral norms. Accordingly, the sole aim of genuine inquiry should be to end up with theories whose claims are justified with reference to the standard of truth as well as to the standard of morality.

## **ii) Morality and ethics**

How should genuine inquirers relate to ethical claims when they justify theories? The answer is linked to what distinguishes “the ethical [...] employment of practical reason” from “the moral” (Habermas 1993: 1), claims about what is good from claims about what is right. Moral norms are “deontological”, refer to “obligatory rule-following”, and can be justified to all as free and equal in context-transcending discourse (Habermas 1999: 255): A moral norm is justified when it has survived “a universalization test” (Habermas 1999: 153). This implies that “the ‘oughtness’ of binding norms has the absolute sense of an unconditioned and universal obligation” (op.cit.: 255).

Ethical claims always “compete with” other ethical claims (op.cit.: 153).<sup>169</sup> The “attractiveness” of “intersubjectively shared values”, as opposed to norms, is that it has

[...] the relative sense of an estimation of goods that has become established or been adopted in cultures and forms of life: serious value choices or higher-order preferences tell<sup>170</sup> us what is good for us (or for me) overall and in the long run. Different norms must not contradict one another if they claim validity for the same circle of addressees; they must fit together into a coherent complex, that is, form a system. Different values compete for priority from case to case; to the extent that they find intersubjective recognition within a culture or form of life, they form flexible configurations filled with tension (op.cit.: 255).

Hence, “values claim relative validity” (op.cit.: 153): They should be read “teleologically”, “in terms of the *relative* preferability of specific values or interests” (original emphasis, *ibid.*).<sup>171</sup> In contrast to the idealization of moral justification, the idealization of ethical justification is, therefore, not truth-analogous: An internal pragmatic connection between justified ethical beliefs and universal rational acceptability cannot be established. Ethical claims may, however, be discussed reasonably: Ethical claims, agreement and disagreement can be more or less reasonable, even if always “indexed to particular communities” (Habermas 2003: 229).<sup>172</sup> There is an ethical “employment of practical reason”, an ethical “reflective” approach to the question “What should I do?”, in addition to the “moral” and “pragmatic”<sup>173</sup> approach to practical problems (Habermas 1993: 1). Thus, in contrast to how they are pictured by Haack, values qua claims that are ethical (and that cannot be conceptualized as moral standards), are not simply subjective, unpredictable, irrational wishes or desires.

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<sup>169</sup> Rawls refers to ethical pluralism as a fact. It is an empirical fact in modern society that there are both reasonable and unreasonable ethical pluralism. Reasonable ethical pluralism is, however, also an anthropological fact: Reasonable persons will reasonably disagree due to the burdens of judgment (1996: 36-37, 54-66).

<sup>170</sup> See Chapter 9 for a brief outline of Charles Taylor’s distinction between weak and strong preferences or evaluations.

<sup>171</sup> “Moral norms, of course, embody values or interests, but only such as are universalizable in view of the particular matter at issue” (Habermas 1999: 153).

<sup>172</sup> “[...] values have a certain objectivity, but [...] this objectivity cannot be understood realistically on the model of the sense in which statements of fact have empirical content. Rather, it relies on the intersubjective recognition of evaluative standards for which we can give *good reasons* by reference to a corresponding form of life. Conceived as intersubjectivity, the objectivity of value-judgments is always indexed to particular communities” (my emphasis, Habermas 2003: 229). Confronted with “questions of post-traditional justice, evaluative standards come into play that transcend the context of existing communities” (*ibid.*).

<sup>173</sup> The pragmatic task is “making a rational-choice of means in the light of fixed purposes or of the rational assessment of goals in the light of existing preferences” (Habermas 1993: 3). Rational-choice theory should be interpreted as a particular reflection on the pragmatic use of practical reason, not as a general empirical-anthropological theory about human action and motivation, or a normative theory about how we ought to behave, as suggested by Haack. The pragmatic use of practical reason relies intimately on an adequate use of theoretical reason: “As long as the question ‘What should I do?’ has such pragmatic tasks in view, observations, investigations, comparisons, and assessments undertaken on the basis of empirical data with a view to efficiency or with the aid of other decision rules are appropriate” (*ibid.*).

### iii) Ethical claims and theoretical justification

One option for genuine inquirers would be to dismiss theories with an ethical dimension. However, even if we consider the sole aim of inquiry to be to end up with theories in which only truth-claims are raised, this is impossible because:<sup>174</sup>

a) Our answers to is-questions, determine our answers to can-questions, which in turn influence our answers to questions of whether our values are reasonable (i.e. if our goals cannot be achieved it is unreasonable to uphold them).

b) Theoretical virtues are virtues that may be more in accordance with certain values than with others.

c) Propositions about what 'is' may contain concepts, distinctions and vocabularies with an ethical dimension.<sup>175</sup>

d) The burden of judgment referred to as the burden of total experience may introduce values in theoretical justification.

e) We do not know whether the tacit knowledge we need to rely on when assessing theories has an ethical dimension or not.

f) To institutionalize inquiry is not a value- and interest-neutral endeavor.

The sole aim of genuine inquiry is, however, to end up with significantly true theories. Thus:

g) Even if a) to f) were not the case, the fact that the sole aim of genuine inquiry is to end up with theories that are significant, i.e. that are of interest to us, confronts the inquirer with ethical questions: Questions of significance are questions of what we assess as significant, and such assessments are attached to values.

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<sup>174</sup> This is a summing up of the arguments against Haack's defense of theoretical justification free from 'values' qua *values*, presented so far in this chapter.

<sup>175</sup> It is possible to think of examples of inquiry in some of the natural sciences, for example in theoretical physics and mathematics, in the humanities, for example in formal linguistics, and in the social sciences, for example in mathematic economics, that do not seem to include concepts and distinctions that are value-laden. This is, however, a question for investigation, not for assumption.

a) to g) imply that theoretical justification is influenced by values. Accordingly, the sole aim of genuine inquiry should be to end up with theories whose claims are justified with reference to the standard of truth, to the standard of morality – as well as to a standard of ethical reasonableness.

Ethical reasonableness in inquiry requires that inquirers critically deliberate upon their values,<sup>176</sup> and revise them if scrutiny proves them unreasonable. Critical ethical dialogue is facilitated by the presence of participants in deliberation with competing values. “Impartiality” or “fairness” when confronted with ethical questions “demands attention to all the [...] arguments that support or undermine each side’s value-judgments, not a pose of value-neutrality”: All relevant “arguments” should be introduced as far as possible, all “sides” represented as far as possible (Anderson 1995a: 42). An impartial approach to ethical questions requires dialogue among fellow subjects with different views on the questions in question.

Values can sometimes be redescribed and transformed, after criticism and dialogue, into moral norms. Impartiality or fairness in inquiry when ethical claims are involved, implies “a commitment to pass judgment in relation to a set of evaluative standards that transcends the competing interests of those who advocate rival answers to a question” (Anderson 1995a: 42). Ethical claims should, if possible, be redescribed in a way that make them acceptable to those initially defending them, but also acceptable, or at least more acceptable, to those who do not. Thus, genuine inquirers, with a reasonable approach to ethical questions, should not only seek arguments that both “support” and “undermine each side’s value judgments”, they should try and integrate the different reasonable “sides” by developing synthesized ethical standards “that transcends the competing interests” (ibid.). This might imply to transform values into norms; claims of competing comprehensive doctrines into obligatory rules.<sup>177</sup> Feminist inquirers, for example, may subscribe to competing values,<sup>178</sup> but share a normative

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<sup>176</sup> This requires making them explicit. Feminist inquirers’ explicit outlines of their values should be appreciated. Explicitness makes criticism possible. Value-implicitness makes criticism more difficult.

<sup>177</sup> Anderson (along with, for example, Putnam), does not distinguish between values and moral norms. Anderson thus makes her defense of value-laden theoretical justification more controversial than necessary. She excludes the possibility that some might allow for moral norms to regulate theoretical justification, even if they do not allow theoretical justification to include ethical considerations.

<sup>178</sup> See Chapter 5.

commitment that can be distinguished and justified from a moral point of view.<sup>179</sup> Feminist inquirers, or the majority of them, may, also, share certain values; standards “that transcends the[ir] competing interests”, that do not, however, have the universal status of moral norms (ibid.). Moreover, the values of feminist inquirers may be based on truth-claims that can be distinguished and justified relative to the ideal standard of truth.<sup>180</sup>

Is the requirement of ethical reasonableness in inquiry compatible with respecting inquirers’ privacy?<sup>181</sup> Inquirers are persons with a right to personal autonomy implying that they have no obligation to reveal and justify their private values to others. If, however, inquirers’ values, for example their religious or political views, influence their investigations, and their investigations are institutionalized investigations; inquiry in a public institution, citizens have a right to justification of inquirers’ values, because citizens have a right to justification of the decisions and procedures of public institutions (Rawls 1996, Forst 1999).<sup>182</sup> If inquirers’ religious or political views influence their investigations, these views may in turn influence the content of decisions and the design of procedures of public institutions. Citizens would then have a right to have such influences justified.

As highlighted by Haack, scientific inquiry is not inherently exceptional: “Our standards of what constitutes good, honest, thorough inquiry and what constitutes good, strong, supportive evidence are not internal to science” (Haack 1998: 94).<sup>183</sup> There are no deep differences between standards of genuine inquiry and standards of genuine scientific inquiry.<sup>184</sup> Scientists are, however, professional inquirers who are expected to make their investigations as genuine as possible.<sup>185</sup> The normative and actual legitimacy of the scientific institution is intimately

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<sup>179</sup> A feminist proposal of an ethic of care may consist of both values competing with other values, and claims that may be justified from a moral point of view (see Chapter 5 and Chapter 9).

<sup>180</sup> A feminist proposal of an ethic of care may rely decisively on claims about state of affairs. If, for example, the care values prescribed are considered to be values inherent in the mother-child relationship, this is a prescription based on a claim about the empirical qualities of the mother-child relationship (see Chapter 5).

<sup>181</sup> For a discussion of the right to privacy, see Chapter 9.

<sup>182</sup> See 2.2.2 and Chapter 9.

<sup>183</sup> Or as she puts it in a recent article: “For not all, and not only, scientists are good, reliable inquirers; and there *is no* [...] uniquely rational mode of inference or procedure of inquiry used by all scientists and only by scientists. Rather, as Einstein once put it, scientific inquiry is a refinement of our everyday thinking” (original emphasis, Haack 2004: 22).

<sup>184</sup> “Even if the community of inquirers undertakes its cooperative search for truth under the special conditions of an experimental engagement with nature and a communicative engagement with experts, this complex undertaking embodies none other than the very type of intelligence that determines our ordinary practices and everyday communication. There is an internal connection between the practice of inquiry and the contexts of the lifeworld in which it is rooted” (Habermas 2003: 222).

<sup>185</sup> And expect of themselves to investigate genuinely (consider, for example, scientists’ collective self-understanding as it is expressed in the scientific ethos, see 2.4.2).

linked to the idea that scientific inquirers are genuine inquirers. Science, moreover, is a public institution,<sup>186</sup> and citizens have a right to justification of the decisions and procedures of public institutions.

## 2.4.5 Representation, civility and democracy

### i) Cognitive and intellectual authority

Haack prescribes meritocratic recruitment to professional inquiry: If what is meant with a democratic epistemology is “only that no one should be excluded from a scientific career on the basis of irrelevant considerations such as race, sex, or eye color”, this is “right” – but this “democratic” norm of recruitment is “right” because it is “meritocratic in its thrust” (Haack 1998: 114). A prescription of simple, untempered meritocracy in recruitment is, however, an inadequate prescription – even if it could be argued that theoretical justification is value-free, and theories had consisted only of truth-claims. Let me, as a first step, elaborate why untempered meritocracy is not necessarily truth-functional.

Merit should be a decisive criterion for being recruited as a professional inquirer in a public institution. Helen Longino, in *Manifesto* pointed out as one of Haack’s main opponents, distinguishes between cognitive and intellectual authority. There is, she says, “equality of intellectual authority”; everyone has an equal “capacity to participate in critical discussion and thus to contribute to critical understanding”. This is, however, compatible with “according greater cognitive authority on some matters to those one regards as having acquired more knowledge concerning those matters than others”: “While the criterion [equality of intellectual authority] imposes duties of inclusion and attention, it does not require that each individual, no matter what their past record or state of training, should be granted equal authority on every matter” (2002a: 131-133). Elizabeth Anderson argues in a similar way:

Expertise does, of course, matter in inquiry [...]. Democracy is [...] compatible with honoring *merit* in persons, with recognizing that some people are more skilled, accomplished, intelligent, persuasive, interesting, and trustworthy than others, and with supporting them for these reasons (original emphasis, 1995b: 205).

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<sup>186</sup> Science is not the only public institution where inquiry takes place. Inquiry with public relevance, takes place, for example, in what David Guston (2000) refers to as “boundary organizations”.

Genuine truth-seeking on different problems within different areas requires particular skills, and truth-seekers that can demonstrate such skills should be preferred to those who cannot. The standard is, thus, “tempered equality” among truth-seekers: Intellectual equality tempered by reasonable cognitive inequality (Longino 2002a: 131).

## **ii) Tempered meritocracy in truth-seeking**

Meritocracy in recruitment to truth-seeking needs, however, also to be tempered, if for no other reason, at least for the sake of truth. A community of inquirers is, according to Haack, epistemologically preferable to an individual inquirer. “[...] in a community of inquirers some will be more conservative in temperament, inclined to try adapting an old theory to new evidence, others more radical, readier to look for a new approach”: “Real scientists” are never “single-mindedly devoted to truth” (Haack 1998: 97-98). In an investigating community “[...] individual idiosyncracies or weaknesses may [however] compensate for each other” (ibid.). If this is the case, it is crucial to make sure that there are inquirers with relevant complementary “idiosyncracies” present (ibid.).

Thus, Haack suggests herself that meritocracy in recruitment to inquiry should be tempered by representative concerns – for the sake of truth. To have different views represented may be truth-functional. This is John Stuart Mill’s famous instrumental argument: “He argued that the truth would most likely be discovered, disseminated, and entrenched in a society that permitted all points of view to be expressed and criticized” (Anderson 1995b: 194, Kitcher 2001, Longino 2002).

Different differences may be conceived as relevant. Haack suggests that both “radicals” and “conservatives” should be present; both those who stick to the puzzle solving within the old paradigm (the conservatives), and those who opt for a new paradigm (the radicals) (op.cit.: 97-98).<sup>187</sup> Skirbekk argues that the presence of different “conceptual perspectives” or “disciplines” in truth-seeking gives us “a truer picture” (2001: 10). Anderson argues that

[...] justification will be spurious if the community’s relations of inquiry systematically exclude or discount the testimony of rational inquirers who have access to a different set of evidence, or who would provide alternative critical perspectives that correct the biases of the community’s membership (1995b: 192).

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<sup>187</sup> Haack relies on Kuhn: “Kuhn says something not dissimilar [...]” (1998: 103). This implies that Haack subscribes to a moderate interpretation of Kuhn’s incommensurability thesis (Hoyningen-Huene 1990).



For the sake of truth, inquirers with different “ascribed social status[es]” should be represented in the community of inquirers; “race” “gender”, “class” and “ethnicity” may for example be relevant, because such statutes influence which “set of evidence” you have access to, and what “perspectives” and “biases” you have (op.cit.: 192, 205):

The internal knowledge-promoting aims of the university thus calls for measures to promote equality of access by all groups in society to memberships in its ranks. This is an argument for affirmative action<sup>188</sup> in university admissions and faculty hiring that recognizes the positive contributions that members of oppressed groups can and do make to enhancing the objectivity of research. Equality of access thorough affirmative action policies is not, therefore, an external political goal that threatens to compromise the quality of research. It is a means to promote the objectivity of that research (1995b: 198).

### **iii) Equal respect in truth-seeking**

Truth-seeking qua argumentation on truth-claims implies a moral norm of equal respect. Our equal intellectual authority is linked to our equal “capacity to participate in critical discussion and thus to contribute to critical understanding” (Longino 2002a: 131):<sup>189</sup>

In epistemic democracies, equality means that all communicatively competent persons are acknowledged as having the status of inquirers: they must be regarded as reason-givers and reason-takers, and their speech interpreted accordingly. All inquirers have a status that entitles them to call upon others to explain and justify their beliefs, and to offer reasons for them to change their beliefs, which mean that others are obliged to listen and respond in kind (Anderson 1995b: 205).

Thus, to approach each other as ‘reason-givers and reason-takers’, to give each other ‘the status of inquirers’, to treat each other with equal respect, with equal intellectual authority, is not only truth-functional, it is also what we presuppose as a moral norm when arguing over truth.<sup>190</sup>

The norm of equal respect in truth-seeking, implies that no truth-seekers should be given “second-class” authority for example “on account of his or her race, gender, class, ethnicity, or other ascribed social status” (Anderson 1995b: 205):

This means that the academy must structure its communicative relations by norms that ensure that inquirers have their say, that encourage them to pay attention to what other members say,

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<sup>188</sup> My discussion here and in the next sections raises difficult policy-questions, that I do not go into.

<sup>189</sup> Longino refers here to Habermas.

<sup>190</sup> Note that this is not in fact Longino’s and Anderson’s argument. They rely, in the end, exclusively on Mill’s instrumental argument, and argue that the norm of equal respect in inquiry is truth-functional. I thus re-contextualize their argument in this paragraph.

that discourage them from systematically discounting or distorting what others say, and that urge them to actively respond to criticisms and alternative perspectives by appropriately modifying the content and methods of their studies. These are norms of civility and mutual respect, by which inquirers recognize each others' cognitive authority<sup>191</sup> (op.cit.: 198-199).

Norms of civility<sup>192</sup> should, however, not only regulate the professional community of inquirers; “*all* communicatively competent persons” ought to be “acknowledged as having the status of inquirers” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 205). This implies that also citizens that are not members of the epistemic democracy of the democratic university are to be considered as reason-givers and reason-takers with intellectual authority equal to the intellectual authority of the professional inquirers. “In a democracy [...] merit must be demonstrated to the satisfaction of those who offer their support: they must be persuaded by arguments and evidence, not bullied into submission by those who claim epistemic superiority [...]” (1995b: 205). Those who “must be persuaded” are citizens (ibid.). Whether and how inquiry should be institutionalized is a question for citizens. Citizens should have their say when priorities are made in the context of discovery<sup>193</sup> and in the context of practical application,<sup>194</sup> but also when theories are assessed as more or less warranted. When presented for the outcomes of inquiry; for the theories that professional inquirers consider warranted,<sup>195</sup> citizens should be approached as free, equal and reasonable: Professional inquirers should make

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<sup>191</sup> Note that Anderson's use of 'cognitive authority' is similar to Longino's use of 'intellectual authority'.

<sup>192</sup> See also 2.4.2 on the institutional norms of science.

<sup>193</sup> Confronted with citizens asking for justification of, for example, funding-priorities, it is “better”, Rawls argues, to refer to the value of democratic equality, than to use perfectionist arguments. The confrontation with citizens may “put [...] in question whether society can allocate great public resources to pure science – to mathematics and theoretical physics, say – or to philosophy, or to the arts of painting and music, solely on the grounds that their study and practice realizes certain great excellences of thought, imagination, and feeling. No doubt their study does this, but it is far better to justify the use of public funds to support them by reference to political values. Some public support of art and culture and science, and funding museums and public performances, is certainly vital to the public political culture; to a society's sense of itself and its history, and an awareness of its political traditions. But a large fraction of the social product for the advancement of mathematics and science requires a basis in advancing the good of citizens generally, say by the expected benefits to public health and preserving the environment, or to the needs of (justified) national defense” (Rawls 2001: 152). Rawls defines citizens as reasonable and rational persons; they have a sense of justice and ends they want to advance by fair cooperation (Rawls 1996: 48-54). Thus, obliging professional inquirers to justify their priorities to citizens as reasonable and rational persons is very different from obliging them to justify their priorities to consumers or capitalists.

<sup>194</sup> Haack suggests that there are funding-priorities, principles and policies of recruitment, as well as applications of the outcome of inquiry that are more “just”, “moral” or more “morally objectionable” than others (1998: 14, 119, 167). Citizens should be included when such assessments are made: They have a right to have the decisions and procedures of public institutions justified.

<sup>195</sup> Professional inquirers are, generally speaking, obliged to respond when asked by citizens to present the outcome of their investigations (because citizens have a right to have the decisions of public institutions, and the theories on which they are based, communicated publicly).

serious efforts to convince “those who offer their support” on the basis of evidence and rational arguments; “merit” should be “demonstrated”, not simply “claim[ed]” (ibid.).<sup>196</sup>

The norm of equal respect implies, moreover, that professional inquirers should treat the subject-objects they are studying as reason-givers and reason-takers with equal intellectual authority. There are not only truth-functional reasons for taking the subject-objects reason-giving and reason-taking seriously.<sup>197</sup> Haack acknowledges that it may be truth-functional to take the subject-object seriously when she links treating all concerned subject-objects to the requirement of comprehensiveness:<sup>198</sup>

True, if we are sociologists or anthropologists trying to understand the institution of polygamy in this society, or of slavery in that, then talking to wives *and* husbands, or to slaves *and* masters, would indeed be desirable as part of our evidence-gathering (original emphasis, 1998: 113-114).

Treating all with equal respect is, however, a universally binding norm of civility: Truth-seekers are obliged to treat their subject-objects civilized, whether they reckon it “desirable” as part of their “evidence-gathering” or not (op.cit.: 114).

What principles of recruitment to professional inquiry does the norm of equal respect require? I have so far argued that meritocracy in recruitment may be tempered by representational concerns, if this in fact is truth-functional. Is this compatible with treating all as free and equal? Or is this tempering of meritocracy for the sake of truth unjust? Do we have to choose between what is truth-functional and what is just? Haack defends “equality of opportunity” in recruitment to academia: Everyone should have equal opportunities to “a scientific career” regardless of “irrelevant considerations” like “sex” or “race” (op.cit.: 114). Equality of opportunity is, in her view, truth-functional, but also just. This is a reasonable position.<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>196</sup> Cognitive inequality between inquirers and citizens will complicate their deliberations. Many scientific theories are not easily understood by non-experts. Citizens will, moreover, often not scrutinize the conclusions of professional inquiry, due to lack of time or interest, or because they trust the professionals; they believe professional inquirers make genuine investigations (they may, for example, consider the principles and policies of recruitment to professional inquiry to be truth-functional and just, and therefore trust what professional inquirers do). The citizen has, however, ultimately, a right to ask, and expect an argumentative response.

<sup>197</sup> See 2.3.1.

<sup>198</sup> Foundherentism prescribes justification faithful to considerations of supportiveness, of independent security and of comprehensiveness (see 1.2.3).

<sup>199</sup> See Chapter 8.

Haack assumes that equality of opportunity in recruitment to professional inquiry requires only “procedural-fairness policies” or “anti-discrimination policies”, and is incompatible with “affirmative action” or “preferential hiring policies” (op.cit.: 169). But letting anti-discrimination policies regulate recruitment to academia will not secure equal opportunities if the candidates of recruitment have an unequal standing. To secure all candidates of recruitment an equal standing requires protection of freedom of thought and speech and other civil rights, as Haack herself acknowledges. What Nancy Fraser (2003) refers to as “parity in participation” requires, moreover, socio-economic redistribution and cultural recognition.<sup>200</sup>

Thus, the alternative to Haack’s anti-discrimination policies is not necessarily preferential hiring policies. It could be anti-discrimination policies in combination with a broad set of policies developed to protect the equal standing of all. Preferential hiring policies are, however, not necessarily incompatible with equality of opportunity. Among others Ronald Dworkin (2000) has argued, that affirmative action may be designed in ways that are compatible with treating all individuals with equal respect.<sup>201</sup> Thus, to temper meritocracy by representational concerns, if this is truth-functional, is not necessarily unjust.

#### **iv) Democracy in value-laden inquiry**

Value-laden inquiry cannot be equated with truth-seeking, however. Inquirers are confronted with ethical and moral questions in the context of justification as well as in the context of discovery and in the context of practical application. I have three remarks in this connection.

First, it cannot be assumed that inquirers with cognitive authority in discussions of state of affairs are also better equipped than others in coming to conclusions that are also just and ethically reasonable. Cognitive inequality that is truth-functional is not necessarily functional in discussions of other validity-claims. Skills that might make us particularly competent to investigate what ‘is’ in the social or natural world, do not necessarily make us particularly competent to make judgments about what norms are valid or about goodness. Thus, that inquiry is value-laden, is an argument for taking another look at what skills we regard as relevant in recruitment to professional inquiry. All “members” of “a well-ordered society, that is, a society in which institutions are just and this fact is publicly recognized”, have, Rawls

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<sup>200</sup> See Chapter 8 for an elaboration of some of Fraser’s ideas.

<sup>201</sup> It may, however, also be designed in ways that are incompatible with the norm of equal respect (see Chapter 8).

says, “a strong sense of justice, an effective desire to comply with the existing rules and to give one another that to which they are entitled” (1999: 274), as well as an ability to approach questions of justice as reason-givers and reason-takers: Justice requires motivation for justice as well as deliberative skills. The education of professional inquirers of a well-ordered society should, accordingly, focus on cultivating their sense of justice, and stress the significance of a deliberative approach to ethical and moral questions.<sup>202</sup>

Second, the fact that inquirers are confronted with moral and ethical questions, even in the context of justification, calls for another look at who are recruited to professional inquiry. Letting meritocracy be tempered by representative concerns for the sake of truth is not necessarily incompatible with the norm of equal respect. A different question is whether living up to standards of rightness and ethical reasonableness in fact require that representative concerns are taken into account in recruitment to professional inquiry. In moral discourse all concerned are to be included as free and equal. Hence, it may be a problem from a moral point of view, if, for example, certain groups (such as women) are excluded from the moral deliberations of the community of professional inquirers, if these groups have concerns different from the concerns of groups that are included (such as men), due to, for example, differences in social situation.<sup>203</sup> Also ethical reasonableness or ‘impartiality’ requires that different ‘sides’ and ‘arguments’ are taken into account. If certain groups (such as women) approach ethical questions systematically different from how other groups (such as men) approach them, due to, for example, differences in their social situation,<sup>204</sup> it will thus be a problem if women are systematically excluded from professional inquiry, where inquirers are confronted with value-issues in addition to other issues.

A third question is whether different institutional solutions; “new advisory institutions” such as “lay juries” (Giæver 2004: 24, 27), are required to guarantee citizens reasonable influence on inquiry qua value-laden inquiry. It may be argued, of course, that such institutions may even be truth-functional.<sup>205</sup> The fact that inquiry, even in the context of justification, confronts professional inquirers with questions of norms and values, makes the case for lay influence

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<sup>202</sup> To cultivate in all citizens a sense of justice is a primary task for the family and for public education (consider also my reflections on the conditions of individuation in Chapter 9)

<sup>203</sup> Whether women’s social situation is different from that of men is a question of empirical investigation (see Chapter 4). To what extent women will veto moral norms that men will not veto, is a question that cannot be settled until moral deliberations have taken place where all concerned (women as well as men) participate as free and equal reason-givers and reason-takers.

<sup>204</sup> Whether this is the case, is a question for investigation and deliberation.

<sup>205</sup> Along the lines of John Stuart Mill.

stronger, however, because professional inquirers are experts in a particular field of empirical investigation, not on ethics and morality: It cannot be assumed that inquirers with cognitive authority in discussions of state of affairs are also better equipped than others in coming to conclusions that are also just and ethically reasonable.<sup>206</sup>

## 2.4.6 What is the political?

Haack fears that inquirers' ethical and *political* views may influence theoretical justification; a "politicization" of inquiry (op.cit.: 119). The political can be considered as a subcategory of the ethical, as when Habermas (1999) distinguishes collective ethical-political notions of goodness from individuals' ethical-existentialist ideas of goodness. In dealing with both, genuine inquirers should strive for reasonableness and 'impartiality' in their assessments.

The term 'political' has, however, also other meanings. In *Political Liberalism* John Rawls argues, for example, that the distinction between the good and the right, comprehensive doctrines and a freestanding notion of justice, should be understood as a distinction, not between ethical values and moral norms, but as one between ethical values and political norms reasonable and rational persons of modern pluralist society can subscribe to (in an "overlapping consensus" (Rawls 1996: 131-172). Whether the political norms of an overlapping consensus are legitimate is, however, also a question of whether they are justified from a moral point of view.<sup>207</sup>

Claims are also referred to as political claims, if they are raised in political discourse understood as a particular institutionalized discourse:<sup>208</sup> Political discourse is the discourse of citizens that goes on in the 'strong' political publics where binding decisions are made according to formal procedures, as well as in 'weaker' less formalized publics of democratic opinion and will formation (Fraser 1992).<sup>209</sup> Professional inquiry in public institutions should

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<sup>206</sup> How successful the use of lay juries in fact has been, is a different question. Øyvind Giæver argues that "traditional systems of expert advice work reasonably well", and questions the value of lay juries (2004: 2). Giæver assumes, however, that the outcome of deliberations on values in a group of scientists "with differing political views" would always be less "prejudiced" than lay deliberations (op.cit.: 27). This is a questionable assumption.

<sup>207</sup> Consider Rawls' and Habermas' discussion of Rawls' 'freestanding' notion of justice in *The Journal of Philosophy*, March 1995.

<sup>208</sup> This is also how scientific discourse may be conceived; as a particular institutionalized discourse.

<sup>209</sup> See also Chapter 7 and 9 on Nancy Fraser's notion of politics.

be regulated with reference to the political discourse among citizens in the ways outlined in 2.4.4 and 2.4.5.

If the political regime in which professional inquiry takes place is illegitimate, if, for example, all citizens are not treated with equal respect, matters are different, however. Haack stresses that genuine investigations are investigations within the limits of law: A kind of inquiry she regards as obviously “morally objectionable” is when the inquirer operates as a “crook paid to find out where the sewer runs so the gang can get into the vault” (1998: 14). Whether it is objectionable that genuine inquirers break laws depends, however, on whether the laws are legitimate or not, i.e. on whether they are the outcome of just procedures.<sup>210</sup> It is not necessarily objectionable for a genuine inquirer to help the gang to get into the vault in a totalitarian regime, if this operation, let us say, was part of a sabotage against the regime. Also in a well-ordered society civil obedience is allowed for, under certain conditions, moreover (Rawls 1999: 326-330).

## **2.5 Assessing the fifth premise<sup>211</sup>**

Haack is correct when pointing out that the wishful and fearful thinking of sham reasoning, as she describes it, is indefensible for logical reasons. It is impossible to derive “an ‘is’ from an ‘ought’” (1998: 129). The wish or desire that P provides no evidential support for P. Allowing values to influence and moral norms to regulate theoretical justification is, however, compatible with dismissing sham reasoning.

What I have argued so far, is that significant theories have ethical and moral dimensions that can be assessed as more or less warranted. The aim of genuine inquiry should be to end up with theories whose claims are justified with reference to the standard of truth, to the standard of morality, as well as to a standard of ethical reasonableness. Does this imply that a theory consisting of warranted truth-claims, but which refers to moral and ethical claims which are unwarranted, is a theory genuine inquirers should dismiss?

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<sup>210</sup> Consider for example Habermas’ (1999) outline of the relationship between justice, democracy and the rule of law. A recent article by Haack has the following sentence in its introduction: “Justice requires just laws, of course, and just administration of those laws; but it also requires factual truth” (2004: 15). She goes on elaborating the conditions of genuine truth-seeking in the American legal system, and says no more about the relationship between justice and legal norms.

<sup>211</sup> The wish or desire that P provides no evidential support for P.

If inquirers accept a theory that refers to norms that are incompatible with the moral norm of equal respect they implicitly assume when they inquire and accept, they commit a performative self-contradiction. If they accept a theory that refers to norms that are incompatible with norms all would accept as free and equal in moral discourse, they disrespect norms of civility that are universally binding. Genuine inquiry should, however, be moral and performatively consistent: Genuine inquirers should not accept a theory consisting of warranted truth-claims if the moral claims to which it refers are unwarranted.<sup>212</sup> This is not sham reasoning; this is not to deduce a conclusion about state of affairs from a conclusion about how state of affairs ought to be regulated, i.e. to consider an idea about what ought to be as “*evidence* that things are or are not so” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 129). This is to recognize that genuine inquirers are also moral persons with the obligations of moral persons, and thus that they should pursue inquiry within the limits of those obligations.<sup>213</sup> If this is what defending a ‘democratic’ epistemology implies, I would defend a democratic epistemology.<sup>214</sup>

When genuine inquirers are confronted with theories referring to claims that are ethically unreasonable, things are not so clear, however. Warrant comes in degrees: The theories genuine inquirers accept are more or less warranted. A theory consisting of warranted truth-claims, which is ‘democratic’ in the sense suggested, but which refers to values in a ‘partial’ way, may be considered less warranted than a theory consisting of warranted truth-claims, which is ‘democratic’ in the sense suggested, and refers to values in an ‘impartial’ and reasonable way. The theory may, however, be considered far better warranted than a theory whose claims about state of affairs are questionable, but which refers to values in an ‘impartial’ and reasonable way.<sup>215</sup> Not in any case is sham reasoning an option for genuine

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<sup>212</sup> Haack implicitly suggests that genuine inquiry should be regulated by certain moral standards (see Chapter 1). In the end, she defends, however, her argument for value-freedom in theoretical justification unmodified.

<sup>213</sup> The discussions of this section, as the discussions of the previous sections, raise difficult policy-questions that I will have to leave for another occasion (for example the question of how, more concretely, to institutionalize inquiry within the ‘limits’ of morality). I think Kitcher is correct when he notes that “banning” certain kinds of investigations (i.e. limiting the freedom of thought and speech) because they are ‘uncivil’ needs a separate argument (2002: 93-108). Other less controversial and not necessarily less efficient measures may be taken, moreover. ‘Civil’ investigations may, for example, be encouraged in the education of professional inquirers, through priorities in funding, and through integrating a civil code in the scientific ethos.

<sup>214</sup> If defending democratic epistemology implies recommending that “theory-choice” is “put to a vote”, I would, obviously, not defend it (Haack 1998: 113).

<sup>215</sup> Citizens should keep this in mind when deliberating on and deciding what kind of investigation to fund: Investigations based on deeply problematic ethical postulates might end up with theories that are significantly true.



inquirers: An 'is' cannot be derived from a claim about what we value, even if the value-claim is reasonable.

It should be stressed that a theory that is, in one way or another, influenced by, for example, feminist values, may be based on warranted truth-claims. Haack tends to rule out this possibility. In a situation of "theory-choice" the alternative to a 'feminist' theory based on warranted truth-claims<sup>216</sup> (op.cit.: 113), may, moreover, be a theory that is neither 'feminist' nor warranted as true, or it may be a theory that is not 'feminist' but based on a similar set of warranted truth-claims as the 'feminist' theory. In this situation, opting for the 'feminist' theory would not be less compatible with standards of genuine inquiry than opting for the empirically warranted, but not 'feminist', theory (it might even be more compatible with standards of genuine inquiry to opt for the 'feminist' one<sup>217</sup>). To opt for the 'feminist' but empirically warranted theory instead of the theory neither 'feminist' nor warranted as true, would, in most cases, be more compatible with standards of genuine inquiry than the other way around.<sup>218</sup> The situations of 'theory-choice' Haack focuses on, exclusively, are, however, situations where the alternatives are, on the one hand, a theory that is not 'feminist', but based on warranted truth-claims – a theory which, however, cannot be value-free, even if Haack assumes that it can – and, on the other, a theory that is 'feminist', not empirically warranted, and a product of sham reasoning. In such cases, genuine inquirers should, obviously, dismiss the unwarranted and sham theory, whether 'feminist' or not.<sup>219</sup> A more interesting case, however, is when the alternatives are, on the one hand, a 'feminist' theory based on claims compatible with norms of civility, and, on the other hand, a theory that is not 'feminist' but compatible with norms of civility, and the latter is based on truth-claims that are somewhat better warranted than the truth-claims of the 'feminist' theory, whereas the 'feminist' theory is based on ethical claims that are better warranted than the ethical claims of the theory that is not 'feminist'. In this situation, genuine inquirers should, as a rule, maximize warrant, i.e. opt for the theory whose truth-claims are better warranted, even if it is ethically

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<sup>216</sup> A theory influenced, in one way or another, by feminist values.

<sup>217</sup> If, for example, the theory not 'feminist' were based on claims incompatible with norms of civility. Were instead the 'feminist' theory based on claims incompatible with norms of civility (i.e. if the theory in question were influenced by a feminist ethical-political project contradicting the norm of equal respect), while the theory not 'feminist' were compatible, genuine inquirers would, obviously, opt for the latter.

<sup>218</sup> If the 'feminist' theory in question were based on claims incompatible with norms of civility, genuine inquirers would dismiss both alternatives.

<sup>219</sup> Whether they should accept the alternative theory depends, among other things, on to what extent the alternative theory is based on better warranted truth-claims than other alternative theories, and on whether it is based on claims that do not contradict the norm of equal respect.

less ‘impartial’ than the alternative theory, because ethical claims, however ‘impartial’, is always ‘competing’ with alternative claims in a way truth-claims warranted as approximately true are not (see 2.4.4).<sup>220</sup>

Haack’s horror scenario is that inquiry is reduced to a pseudo-inquiry the aim of which is not to find out how things are, but solely to facilitate a politically correct notion of goodness – for example a feminist notion – even if this means disregarding warranted truth-claims. This kind of wishful thinking might be an implication of subscribing to Richard Rorty’s (2003) prescription of replacing the aim of significant truth with that of ‘solidarity’ or ‘social hope’. Nothing of what I have said implies embracing such a prescription. Haack is wrong when she equates the wishful thinking of Rorty and feminists subscribing to similar prescriptions with the wishful thinking of Nazi and Soviet-style science, however. The wishful thinkers of the Nazi- and Soviet-style science ‘wished’ for things that were morally objectionable. Rorty and his followers wish precisely for ‘social hope’ and ‘solidarity’, i.e. they do not seem to ‘wish’ for something that fundamentally contradicts basic norms of civility.

## 2.6 A different conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to demonstrate that the premises in Haack’s argument for value-freedom are inadequately conceptualized, rest on inconsistencies and several unwarranted assumptions. Hence, her conclusion (6), that theoretical justification cannot refer to values, cannot be upheld, at least not on the basis of this argument.<sup>221</sup>

I have argued, moreover, that genuine inquiry should be regulated by norms of civility where all are treated as free and equal. Epistemology should, in this sense, be ‘democratic’. This is also a feminist prescription in the sense that what is prescribed is that *all* persons, i.e. also persons who are referred to as ‘women’, should be treated as free and equal. I have, furthermore, specified a role for ethical considerations in genuine inquiry – for feminist ethical considerations as well as other ethical considerations. Whether a ‘feminist epistemology’ may be defensible in an even more ambitious sense, is the question I will address in Chapter 4, where I assess Haack’s refutation of feminist standpoint epistemology, i.e. the views of a group of “feminist epistemologists” who claim that epistemology should

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<sup>220</sup> Genuine inquirers use, however, also their good judgment in such cases.

<sup>221</sup> From what I have argued in this chapter, it should be clear that I for the time being do not see how a convincing argument for value-freedom can be made.

embody “some *specifically* feminist insight” (original emphasis, Haack 1998: 119); insights that are more than implications of the argument for the ‘democratization’ of epistemology. First, however, I want to take a closer look at the radical interpretations of the slogan science as social. Are they compatible with a commitment to genuine inquiry?

## CHAPTER 3

# SCIENCE AS SOCIAL AND THE ARGUMENT FOR VALUE-FREEDOM

### 3.0 Moderates – in favor of value-freedom?

Haack criticizes radical interpretations of the idea that science is social. These interpretations make theoretical justification either partly or wholly a matter of “social negotiations”, and so either “play down” or “ignore” warrant, and “accentuate” or “accept only” social acceptance as the aim of inquiry (Haack 1998: 112, 113, 114). Science as social as a radical slogan, targets premise 1), 2) and 3) in Haack’s argument for value-freedom. The radicals, as portrayed by her, claim that social acceptance and not (only) significant truth, is the aim of inquiry (thus denying 1), that whether a theory is justified depends on social acceptance and not (only) on features indicative of its truth (thus denying 2), and that one shows that a theory is most probably true, if this is considered something one should try to show at all, by demonstrating that it is socially accepted, not (only) that it is best supported by independently secure and comprehensive evidence (thus denying 3). In other words, radical interpretations of science as social make inquiry (1), theoretical justification (2) and truth-seeking (3) matters of social negotiation. They pave thus the way for the idea of value-laden justification; the idea that certain values, for example feminist values or democratic values generally, should influence theoretical justification.

Haack’s assessment of the radical position of science as social is, however, too dismissive. There are radical interpretations of science as social (or rather, interpretations of science as social Haack refers to as radical) which are defensible. Other variants of the radical position are in fact indefensible. Agreeing with Haack that variants of the radical position are indefensible is, however, not equivalent to subscribing to her argument for value-freedom.

## 3.1 Wholly a matter of social negotiation? A re-assessment

### 3.1.1 Moderates among the radicals

As a first step, Haack sets herself the task of refuting the most radical position: that inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking are wholly matters of social negotiation; that “scientific knowledge is nothing more than the product of processes of social negotiation” (1998: 112). This position disregards, in her view, the fact that justifying theories is assessing the truth-indicativeness of evidence; justifying beliefs as more or less true or false with reference to the best criteria of justification available. Hence, the most radical position ignores the distinction between warrant and actual acceptance: It accentuates “what at a given time *passes for* scientific knowledge over warrant” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 117).

In an ideal communication community genuine inquirers will, ultimately, end up with theories that are significantly true. Theories we end up with following real investigations will, however, never be complete and final: Even our most warranted opinions are not Final Opinions. This is because all real theories are fallible (even those justified under approximately ideal conditions), but also because the empirical conditions under which real investigations take place, may be far from ideal. These distinctions, between ideal and real justification of theories, and real theoretical justification under approximately ideal conditions and under far from ideal conditions; two variants of what Haack refers to as the warrant-acceptance distinction, need to be upheld.

However, regarding inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking as wholly a matter of social negotiation, is not necessarily incompatible with upholding the warrant-acceptance distinction. Whether there is incompatibility, depends on what more precisely the term social negotiation refers to. Haack defines truth as “the ultimate representation [...], compatible with all possible experiential evidence and the fullest logical scrutiny, which would be agreed by all who investigate were inquiry to continue indefinitely” (op.cit.: 162). This is in a sense to conceive of warrant as a matter of social negotiation: It is to link the meaning of truth to the essentially social practice of reason-giving and reason-taking under approximately ideal conditions.

Some of them Haack refers to as radicals, defends a notion of science as social negotiations

which disregards the warrant-acceptance distinction.<sup>222</sup> Helen Longino, one of Haack's main targets among the feminist epistemologists, does not, however. Longino rejects what she refers to as "the rational-social dichotomy" in the approach to the study of science; "the current deadlock between philosophers of science and sociologists of science" (2002a: 2). She defends instead a notion of "pragmatic rationality", where "observation and reasoning" are regarded as "social", "interactive" or "dialogical", "that is, as activities involving discursive interactions among different voices" (op.cit.: 77, 99).<sup>223</sup> A "predecessor" to Longino's approach is, among others, Charles Sanders Peirce – which is also the predecessor of Haack's foundherentism – and his idea that inquiry approaches "(ultimate) truth [...] in the long run" only if it is made into "a social activity"; if it is pursued in a "community" of "critical interaction [...] consisting of all investigators who have ever lived" (op.cit.: 5, 6).<sup>224</sup> Thus, it is correct that Longino disagrees with Haack's argument for value-freedom.<sup>225</sup> But this does not imply that she rubs out, or has to rub out, the warrant-acceptance distinction.

### 3.1.2 Misconceived concessions

Having dismissed the most radical position: that inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking are wholly matters of social negotiation, Haack admits that there are two readings of this position that she would not deny:

- i) Scientific theories and theoretical concepts are "devised, articulated, developed" by scientists or others (1998: 113).
- ii) Theories of the human and social sciences refer to "social institutions" which would not exist "if there weren't human societies" (ibid.).

Haack is correct in claiming both i) and ii), and in claiming that i) and ii) are compatible with upholding the warrant-acceptance distinction. Neither i) nor ii) are, however, compatible with

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<sup>222</sup> Such as Richard Rorty.

<sup>223</sup> Whereas Haack fails to appreciate Longino's rationalism, Longino may be accused of failing to appreciate the "interactionist socialism" and "social methodism" to which Haack has an "explicit commitment", with her notion of inquiry in a community of inquirers (Kitcher 2002: 558).

<sup>224</sup> Longino refers to herself, moreover, as "neither metaphysically antirealist nor epistemologically relativist" but as a "tempered realist" and a "pluralist" (2002a: 141, 183): "Nature may be so complex that it is impossible for any single account of a given process to represent fully all the factors that make a difference to the precise course of the process. On the other hand, it may be possible that, in the long run, a unified complete representation of nature will emerge from the process of inquiry" (op.cit.: 141).

<sup>225</sup> She refers to it and briefly refutes it (Longino 2002a: 49-51).

her argument for value-freedom.<sup>226</sup>

### 3.2 Partly a matter of social negotiation? A re-assessment

Next, Haack attempts to refute the less radical position: that inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking are partly matters of social negotiation. Regarding inquiry, theoretical justification and truth-seeking as partly matters of social negotiation, could be mistaken for Haack's own position.<sup>227</sup> She describes discussions in the context of discovery and in the context of practical application as negotiations between strategic egoists with unpredictable and irrational beliefs and desires. Thus, at least inquiry (if not theoretical justification and truth-seeking) is, in her view, partly a matter of social negotiation. Once more, what is at stake, however, is how to proceed in the context of justification. What concerns Haack, is how to refute misleading ideas about the implications for theoretical justification of the thesis that theories are underdetermined by evidence (the underdetermination thesis). The following four ideas about the implications of the underdetermination thesis are, in her view, indefensible.<sup>228</sup>

- i) Since theories are underdetermined by evidence, we have to recognize whatever else makes our theories socially acceptable as indications of warrant.
- ii) If for examples social evaluations or interests are what make our theories socially acceptable, social evaluations or interests are indications of warrant, since theories are underdetermined by evidence, and we have to recognize whatever else makes our theories socially acceptable as indications of warrant.
- iii) Even if we do not have to recognize in principle whatever else, apart from evidence, makes our theories acceptable as indications of warrant, be it social evaluations, interests or something else, we do so in practice.
- iv) Even if we do not have to recognize in principle whatever else, apart from evidence, makes our theories acceptable as indications of warrant, for example social evaluations and interests, we need to do so in practice, because "we have to act, and so we have to accept some theory [as warranted] as the basis on which to act" (op.cit.: 111).

That i) and ii) are indefensible, is an implication of the warrant-acceptance distinction: What

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<sup>226</sup> Consider the different reasons listed in Chapter 2.

<sup>227</sup> That is: Even if we talk of a notion of social negotiation disregarding the warrant-acceptance distinction (and not a notion of social negotiation compatible with this distinction, see 3.1.1).

<sup>228</sup> The three interpretations of the underdetermination thesis she discusses (see 1.3.2), contain in fact four interpretations.

is accepted in social negotiations at any given time, in any given place, be it social evaluations, interests or something else, should not be equated with what is warranted independently of an assessment of how the social acceptance has come about (i.e. independently of an assessment of whether the conditions under which the acceptance has come about are approximately, or far from, ideal). If this is something we do in practice (iii), then our inquiries are pseudo-inquiries. But this is not something we have to do in practice (iv). We do not have to accept theories as warranted, as justified as more or less true, in order to do something in practice. That is: When acting, we assume, indeed, a background consensus on validity-claims. The validity-claims are, however, not considered as validity-claims before our course of action has been disrupted, and someone has asked questions of validity. The implicit validity-claims of the background consensus are, obviously, not accepted as valid in discourse until they have been made into topics for discourse. We assume them in our lifeworld practices: We act “as if” something was “true”, i.e. we do not accept something as true as investigators, before we have investigated it (ibid.).

Thus, the underdetermination thesis does not make i) to iv) defensible. The fact that theories are underdetermined by evidence should, however, inspire genuine inquirers to investigate whether whatever influences theoretical justification, apart from truth-indicative evidence, be it social evaluations, interests or something else, are warranted influences. Theoretical justification confronts genuine inquirer with ethical and moral questions; they are “inseparable from scientific inquiry” (op.cit.: 110).<sup>229</sup> Thus, Haack’s argument for value-freedom cannot be upheld, even if her refutations of i) to iv) are all valid.

### **3.3 A good, sober sociology of science: A different suggestion**

#### **3.3.1 Good science without good philosophy?**

Haack’s alternative to radical interpretations of science as social, is a moderate proposal of a “good, sober sociology of science” (op.cit.: 99). Her proposal is, however, too restrictive. Haack does not acknowledge that social and cultural studies of science may provide us with a more accurate empirical picture of scientific practices, even if some of the philosophical

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<sup>229</sup> In the way outlined in Chapter 2.



assumptions some or more of these studies are based on, are indefensible.<sup>230</sup> According to Longino, there are today, roughly speaking, “two main streams” of contemporary “social and cultural studies of science”, one focusing on “the relationship between scientific knowledge and relatively large-scale professional and ideological social formations”,<sup>231</sup> the other “often identified as laboratory studies or micro-sociology” focusing on “the interactions within and between laboratories and research programs and on the efforts required to export laboratory work into the non-laboratory world”<sup>232</sup> (Longino 2002a: 7). It is misconceived and scientific to claim that these studies of science show the irrelevance of philosophical concerns. On this point Haack is correct.

It is, however, also unreasonable to assume, like Haack does, that cultural and social studies of science have to be false and insignificant if some of their philosophical assumptions are questionable. Whether a particular empirical study of science ends up with theories that are significantly true, is a question for investigation.<sup>233</sup>

Several kinds of significant questions may be asked in empirical studies of science, moreover. Haack argues that genuine investigators of science should restrict themselves to studying how “the internal organization” and the “external environment” of science facilitate or hamper an “adequate correlation” between acceptance and warrant in particular cases (1998: 108). And such studies may, obviously, be significant. How to facilitate genuine inquiry, and how to hamper pseudo-inquiry, are, however, not the only significant questions sociologists, historians, social anthropologists and social psychologists can ask when investigating state of affairs in science. The scientific institution and scientific practice can be studied from several different interesting points of view, just as other social institutions and practices can.

Science can, furthermore, be studied from other perspectives than the perspectives prescribed by the two streams identified by Longino. This follows from the non-exceptionalist approach

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<sup>230</sup> See for example Martin Hollis’ (1982), Harald Grimen’s (1990) and Adrian Haddock’s (2004) critical discussions of philosophical assumptions of the Edinburgh-school, the so-called Strong Programme.

<sup>231</sup> Longino exemplifies this stream with Barry Barnes, David Bloor and the Edinburgh-school, the so-called Strong Programme, and picks out Andrew Pickering’s *Constructing Quarks* and Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer’s *Leviathan and the Air Pump* as paradigmatic examples.

<sup>232</sup> Longino picks out Karin Knorr-Cetina’s *The Manufacture of Knowledge* (1981) and different works by Bruno Latour (such as *Laboratory Life and Science in Action*) as paradigmatic examples of this stream.

<sup>233</sup> The relationship between an inquirer’s philosophical commitments and the quality of the empirical studies she pursues is far from simple. Note for example how several critics of Michel Foucault’s philosophical presuppositions anyway appreciate his social and cultural analysis (Fraser 1989: 17-68, 161-190, Kitcher 2001: 53, Longino 2002: 86-87).

to science both Longino and Haack defend: If scientific practice is a social practice among other social practices, the scientific institution an institution among other institutions, and scientific knowledge is not essentially different from other kinds of knowledge,<sup>234</sup> then investigators of science have, several ‘streams’ developed within several disciplines to draw upon in their studies.<sup>235</sup> A commitment to non-exceptionalism implies linking theoretical and conceptual developments in empirical studies of science to theoretical and conceptual developments in the study of other social practices and institutions (and, of course, the other way around). Thus, to turn what is often referred to as ‘science studies’ into an intellectual and institutional enclave,<sup>236</sup> decoupled from philosophical discussions<sup>237</sup> and social and cultural studies generally, would be problematic.

### 3.3.2 The internal and external organization of science

What then is Haack’s picture of a good, sober sociology of science, apart from her prescription that it should focus explicitly on factors that facilitate or hamper genuine inquiry? How are the internal organization and the external environment of science to be studied?

Concerning the external environment, Haack is implicit and general. She says that genuine inquiry can only take place in a free and just society. Haack contrasts the free and just society where genuine inquiry is facilitated, with totalitarian regimes, “Nazi” or “Soviet”-style regimes, where genuine inquiry is hampered, because inquirers are not guaranteed “freedom of thought and speech” (op.cit.: 131). Hence, a good, sober sociology of science should, in her view, focus on tracing Nazi- and Soviet-style tendencies in society. However, societies that are not easily associated with such tendencies, for example societies regulated by liberal-democratic constitutions that guarantee freedom of thought and speech, are not necessarily

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<sup>234</sup> This is neither to deny that science has empirically distinguishable traits as practice, institution and knowledge, to deny that the study of science confronts inquirers with particular normative problems, nor to deny that the warrant-acceptance distinction should be upheld.

<sup>235</sup> Consider for example the tradition often referred to as ‘intellectual history’ (for an outline see Thue, forthcoming), that does not seem to fit neatly into any of the two streams. Consider also, for example, studies of science inspired by Pierre Bourdieu. They may indeed be classified as focusing on the relationship between scientific knowledge and large-scale social formations, but would differ substantially from studies inspired by the Edinburgh-school.

<sup>236</sup> For a definition of “science studies”, see Enebak (2004: 1-7).

<sup>237</sup> As noted by Gunnar Skirbekk in a paper on the relationship between science studies and moral philosophy, this does not mean that philosophical discussions should be a main issue in science studies: “[...] even if we think that science studies *should* address [...] normative questions critically and scholarly, this does not mean that questions of normative justification should be the main issue in science studies. There are various interesting and legitimate research themes and research interests, also in science studies” (2004: 10).

free and just, according to more ambitious criteria. A good sober sociology of science should, for example, focus on “the relationship between scientific knowledge and relatively large-scale professional and ideological social formations” of such societies, because such “formations” of various kinds may influence the process of reason-giving and reason-taking in ways that inspire pseudo-inquiry (Fuller 1995, Longino 2002a. 7). Consider for example how feminists have traced interconnections between (what is accepted as) scientific knowledge – even if not warranted as such – and patriarchal evaluations, interests and structures in societies that are not Nazi or Soviet-style regimes (see Fox Keller 1985, Alcoff and Potter 1993, Longino and Fox Keller 1996, Wylie 1996).

Concerning the internal organization of science, Haack prescribes the good, sober sociologist to investigate whether the scientific community has organized competition and cooperation among individual inquirers optimally, i.e. in a way that inspires genuine inquiry.<sup>238</sup> Haack focuses in this connection on the organizational aspects of scientific communities that are formal, official and relatively easily visible, i.e. on how scientific communities are formally organized – in specialized competing and cooperating subcommunities, to which recruitment is officially meritocratic, and on wishes (or fears) that are easily seen and easily measured, such as “fame and fortune” (1998: 9). What should concern a good, sober sociologist are, however, also less formal, less visible evaluations, interests and structures that may facilitate or hamper genuine inquiry. Evaluations, interests and structures in the scientific community cannot, moreover, be studied as though they were not potentially influenced by evaluations, interests and structures in society at large. This has been a main concern in feminist cultural and social studies of society; to highlight the interconnections between the patriarchal ‘external environment’ of science and the ‘internal organization’. Hence, it is not necessarily a fruitful strategy for genuine investigations of the sociology of science, to operate with too strict divisions between internal and external, science and society, the micro-level and the macro-level.

### **3.3.3 Debating science as social: From camps to arguments**

My notion of a good, sober sociology of science is then, in several senses, more permissive than Haack’s notion: I think there are more significant questions to be asked by such a sociology than she does, and more places to look for relevant answers. Consequently, my

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<sup>238</sup> In Chapter 2 I comment on the questionable instrumental approach to the communal character of inquiry and the inadequate rational-choice theory of action in which Haack’s prescription is embedded.

approach to recent contributions in empirical studies of science, and the development of 'science studies', is not dismissive, even though critical. I belong, like Haack, to the moderate camp, in the sense that I defend the warrant-acceptance distinction, realism (as elaborated), and significant truth as the aim of genuine investigations. I think, however, that there are more allies among the scholars Haack refers to as radicals than she herself recognizes. In the end, moreover, vague general labels such as 'moderate' and 'radical' are not very illuminating. What matters are the particular elaboration of and the arguments given for particular positions.

## CHAPTER 4

# FEMINIST STANDPOINT EPISTEMOLOGY: A RECONSTRUCTED CRITIQUE<sup>239</sup>

### 4.0 Should epistemology embody some specifically feminist insight?

In Chapter 2, I argued that genuine inquiry should be regulated by norms of civility where all are treated as free and equal. Epistemology should, in this sense, be ‘democratic’. This is also a feminist prescription in the sense that what is prescribed is that *all* persons, i.e. also persons who are referred to as ‘women’, should be treated as free and equal. I moreover specified a role for ethical considerations in genuine inquiry – for feminist ethical considerations as well as other ethical considerations. In Chapter 3 I outlined how cultural and social studies of science can be pursued without evading the warrant-acceptance distinction. One may, for example, pursue studies that focus on gender, for example studies that show how what is ‘accepted’ as scientific knowledge in contemporary society is influenced by patriarchal social evaluations, interests and structures. Hence, my argument so far for a social, democratic epistemology (in the sense specified), has been general; I might just as well have talked about other concerns than feminist concerns. Thus, so far, I have argued for an epistemology that may be referred to as a feminist epistemology, but which does not, at least not in any deep sense, embody “some *specifically* feminist insight”, to quote Haack (op.cit.: 119). But should it? And what would this mean, more precisely?

### 4.1 Why stress the feminist case? Sexism in science and society

#### 4.1.1 Haack’s general suspicion

Feminism, as I have conceptualized it so far, is a *critical* project, in a general sense; feminists make judgments about things with reference to certain standards. Feminism is, however, also,

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<sup>239</sup> Several of the points made in this chapter were developed in a previous paper, “A Standpoint Theory to the Point?”. I wish to thank Hilary Rose, Kari Wærness, Evelyn Fox Keller and Roger Strand for comments. I have since 2002 been teaching at a course in feminist theory at the University of Bergen. I wish to thank my students for discussing the merits of feminist standpoint epistemology with me.

more specifically, critical of contemporary society. Feminists criticize, for example, practices of contemporary society with reference to a standard of justice (including gender justice): Feminists consider gender injustice to be a real problem. Haack does not deny that gender injustice may be a real problem in several settings, on several occasions (1998: 118-119). However, she suspects that there is less sexism than feminists have argued, for example in the “processes of academic recruitment”, and when “funding policies” are made, and that sexism is more seldom an explanation of “bad science” than feminist scholars have claimed (op.cit.: 176, 203). Presented as it is, as a general suspicion, it is highly problematic. Studies, whether pursued by feminists or by others, should be scrutinized and assessed individually, case by case, with reference to standards of genuine inquiry. Feminists’ conclusions about state of affairs in contemporary science and society cannot be dismissed based on general uninvestigated assumptions about the biases of such conclusions.

But can we not at least *suspect* there to be certain biases? Will feminists not tend to overestimate the presence of sexism? Overestimation of sexism may mean, for example, that:

- i) Human actions are presented as more determined by patriarchal social structures, cultural or psychoanalytical patterns than they in fact are.
- ii) The persuasiveness of patriarchal structures and patterns are overestimated.
- iii) The persuasiveness of patriarchal structures or patterns on one level (for example on a psychoanalytical level) is taken to prove that patriarchal structures or patterns on a different level (for example, on a cultural level) are also persuasive, without additional argument.
- iv) The distinction between patriarchal structures and patterns and gendered structures and patterns (which may or may not be patriarchal) is evaded.
- v) The emphasis on gender injustice results in an underestimation of other kinds of injustice.
- vi) The harmful consequences of patriarchal structures and patterns for individual men or groups of men are underestimated.

Underestimation of sexism, on the other hand, may mean, for example, that:

- i) Human actions are presented as less determined by patriarchal social structures, cultural or psychoanalytical patterns than they in fact are.
- ii) The persuasiveness of patriarchal structures and patterns are underestimated.
- iii) The persuasiveness of patriarchal structures or patterns on one level (for example on a

psychoanalytical level) is not considered an impetus to investigate whether there are also persuasive patriarchal structures or patterns on other levels (for example on a cultural level).

iv) Gendered patterns (which may or may not be patriarchal) are not investigated as possible patriarchal patterns.

v) The emphasis on kinds of injustice other than gender injustice results in an underestimation of gender injustice.

vi) The harmful consequences of patriarchal structures and patterns for individual men or groups of men are overestimated.

There is no general reason to believe that the degree of overestimation of sexism among feminist inquirers would be very different from the degree of overestimation of, for example, racism among inquirers committed to anti-racist norms. The question is whether we have a general reason to expect that inquirers explicitly committed to, for example, anti-racism or anti-sexism, overestimate the degree of racism or sexism. Were this the case, it would not be because their commitments were made explicit: Problems of over- and underestimation are not solved by hiding or ignoring the commitments that are possibly biasing one's investigations.<sup>240</sup>

There may, however, be possibly biasing professional interests involved when feminists study sexism (and anti-racists study racism). If it, for example, turns out that sexism in contemporary society is in fact a marginal problem, why fund feminist inquirers investigating it? Why not concentrate on other issues? The fear of being confronted with such questions may tempt feminist inquirers to overestimate the problem of sexism. In addition, questions of truthfulness may occur: What if feminists' engagement against sexism – an engagement often of a comprehensive ethical-political and deep existential kind – has been based on wishful or fearful thinking, rather than on theories of state affairs established on the basis of genuine inquiry? Have feminists been deceiving themselves? To overestimate sexism may seem a convenient thing to do, when confronted by such disturbing questions concerning one's self-understanding.

However, not only feminist inquirers have professional interests and vulnerable identities. Inquirers investigating problems other than sexism, or who consider the problem of sexism to

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<sup>240</sup> See also Chapter 2.

be marginal, may have a professional interest in presenting sexism as marginal – and so be tempted to underestimate it – in order to have their investigations properly funded. Also the self-understanding of many scientists is at stake, moreover, if feminist analyses of the persuasiveness of sexism in contemporary science and society turn out to be accurate.

Hence, generally speaking, we should not expect feminist inquirers to do either better or worse as genuine inquirers. Rather, we should scrutinize their particular contributions according to the same criteria as other contributions. Feminists should be treated as reason-givers and reason-takers on par with other reasons-givers and reason-takers. This is an issue of what is truth-functional, but also an issue of respecting fundamental norms of civility. General suspicions about the intellectual integrity of feminist inquirers of the kind Haack notoriously raises thus disturb not only genuine truth-seeking, they are also morally disturbing.

#### **4.1.2 Sexism in the natural sciences?**

Haack denies in particular that sexism infects “the physical sciences” (1998: 117). Feminists who claim this, exaggerates “the supposed ubiquity of sexual metaphors in the writing of scientists and philosophers of science”: “[...] whether a cognitively important metaphor is fruitful, whether it makes us look in the right or in the wrong direction, *is independent of* the desirability or otherwise of the social phenomena on which it calls” (original emphasis, *ibid.*). Her position is, in short, that metaphors that reflect patriarchal norms may be truth-functional, even if these patriarchal norms are undesirable. Initially, Haack has, I think, a point.<sup>241</sup> The point is illuminatingly explicated by Herta Nagl-Docekal in her criticism of Evelyn Fox Keller’s dissection of the sexist metaphors in Francis Bacon’s writings:

Bacon verknüpft verschiedene Elemente – er beschreibt zum einen die Stellung, die Wissenschaft und Technik der Natur gegenüber einnehmen, als eine beherrschende, und er befindet zum anderen, dass sich das Verhältnis der Geschlechter als Analogie bzw. als Metaphor heranziehen lässt. Aus feministischer Perspektive geht es nun primär darum zu thematisieren, wie die Geschlechterbeziehung hier imaginiert ist – es geht also darum, die Subordination der Frau sichtbar zu machen und zurückzuweisen. Eine solche Kritik impliziert die Forderung: Das Verhältnis der Geschlechter muss so gedacht werden, dass es sich nicht als ein Modellfall für die Charakterisierung hierarchischer Strukturen eignet. Der Einwand gegen Bacon, der daraus abzuleiten ist, betrifft freilich nur eines der beiden unterschiedenen Elemente seiner Reflexion – er betrifft Bacons Sicht der Beziehung von Mann und Frau,

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<sup>241</sup> Sexism may, however, infect the physical sciences in ways other than through the use of sexist metaphors (see Chapter 2). Haack, unfortunately, does not deliberate upon this possibility.



während er seine Konzeption des Verhältnisses von Wissenschaft und Technik zur Natur *als solche* untangiert lässt (original emphasis, 1999: 154).

That is: Bacon's "These von der Herrschaft des Menschen über die Natur" might be correct, even if he were using the fact that men have power over women – a fact that can be criticized from the point of view of justice – as a metaphor for this "Herrschaft" (ibid.). Hence, whether Bacon's thesis is correct or not is a *specific* problem, a problem in its own right.<sup>242</sup> "Das Anliegen einer Befreiung der Frau macht es nicht *eo ipso* erforderlich, für andere Bereiche angenommene Unterordnungsstrukturen abzulehnen" (ibid.).<sup>243</sup> However, the issue is perhaps not so clear. It may be, for example, that Fox Keller is correct when she claims that metaphors of symmetry, interrelatedness and connectedness are more cognitively fruitful for genuine inquiry in the natural sciences than Baconian metaphors of "Herrschaft".<sup>244</sup> Thus, if patriarchal norms of women's subordination cause us to avoid such metaphors, because symmetry, interrelatedness and connectedness are something we associate with the female qua the subordinate, these norms are truth-dysfunctional.<sup>245</sup> Such norms are, moreover, morally unjustified, because they are incompatible with fundamental norms of civility. This does not mean that using metaphors which utilize in one way or another the fact that patriarchal relations do exist (a fact that few feminists would deny), is in itself morally questionable. The problem occurs if the inquirer claims, more or less explicitly, that such relations are legitimate.<sup>246</sup>

## 4.2 Sandra Harding's feminist standpoint epistemology: An assessment

The question remains, however, as to whether feminists have anything in particular to offer a philosophy of inquiry. In practice this seems not to be the case, according to Haack, who

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<sup>242</sup> I advance this point in a previous paper, "Feminism, arguments and rhetoric" (unpublished). I wish to thank Søren Kjølrup for making me think more thoroughly about this relationship.

<sup>243</sup> Nagl-Docekal turns this into a general point regarding the feminist critique of the hierarchical dichotomies described metaphorically as being like the male-female hierarchy. For example: It may be that morality should be based more on sentiments, less on reason. And it may be that a possible sentimental basis for morality has been overlooked or marginalized because sentiments have, traditionally, been associated with femininity. How far morality should have a sentimental basis is, however, a matter for separate argument. It cannot simply be deduced from the fact that the male-female hierarchy, so often used to illustrate the traditional dichotomical hierarchy between reason and sentiments, is illegitimate.

<sup>244</sup> This needs to be investigated.

<sup>245</sup> Patriarchal norms may moreover be truth-dysfunctional for other reasons (see Chapter 2).

<sup>246</sup> See also Chapter 2.

concludes: “[...] *neither all, nor only*, women, or feminists, favor all, or indeed any, of the ideas offered under the rubric feminist epistemology” (my emphasis, 1998: 124). My impression is that most feminists who have dealt explicitly with philosophical questions of inquiry, are radically or moderately less moderate than Haack; but, obviously, so too are many contributors who do not explicitly do philosophy from the point of view of feminism. What, if anything, makes feminist discussions of inquiry different in principle?<sup>247</sup>

One way to argue for feminist epistemology in a more exclusive sense, would be to say, following the feminist standpoint epistemologists, that: *Justified theories, i.e. theories that are significantly true or objective,*<sup>248</sup> *are theories justified from a feminist standpoint.* Feminist standpoint epistemologists regard “the standpoint of women – or of feminism less partial and distorted than the picture of nature and social relations that emerges from conventional research”, to quote Sandra Harding, one of standpoint epistemology’s defenders, and Haack’s main target among the feminist epistemologists in addition to Helen Longino (Harding 1991: 121). In feminist research, Harding says, the “distinctive features of women’s situation in a gender-stratified society are being used as resources”, resources “that enable feminism to produce empirically more accurate descriptions and theoretically richer explanations than does conventional research” (op.cit.: 119).

I agree with Haack that “women’s lives” cannot be thought of as an epistemologically privileged “social situation”, generating “greater objectivity” in the way Harding suggests (op.cit.: 142). I believe, however, that Haack misrepresents the standpoint argument by making it seem more unreasonable than it in fact is. In the following, I wish to outline a critique of feminist standpoint epistemology that takes this epistemology’s complexity into account

#### **4.2.1 Harding’s good reasons**

Let me first acknowledge where Harding and myself agree. We agree that there are more interconnections between a feminist commitment and philosophy than Haack acknowledges, even if our elaborations of these interconnection differ significantly. I consider Harding’s

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<sup>247</sup> Apart from what I summed up from Chapter 2 in 4.0, i.e. a feminist epistemology which is not specifically feminist in any deep sense.

<sup>248</sup> I will exemplify this position with Sandra Harding’s argument, and Harding talks about objectivity, not truth.

historical analysis of how feminists have altered scientific practice illuminating. I agree with her that many of these changes have happened for good reasons, and that there are good reasons for altering scientific practice further: There is considerable evidence showing that sexism in science is a considerable problem.<sup>249</sup> We both, moreover, criticize the idea of value-free justification of theories. A “kind of blindness is advanced”, Harding says:

[...] by the conventional belief that the truly scientific part of knowledge-seeking – the part controlled by methods of research – is only in the context of justification. The context of discovery, where problems are identified as appropriate for scientific investigation, hypotheses are formulated, key concepts are defined – this part of the scientific process is thought to be unexaminable within science by rational methods. Thus real science is restricted to those processes controllable by methodological rules. The methods of science – or, rather, of the special sciences – are restricted to procedures for the testing of already formulated hypotheses. Untouched by these careful methods are those values<sup>250</sup> and interests entrenched in the very statement of what problem is to be researched and in the concepts favored in the hypotheses that are to be tested (Harding 1991: 144).

This parallels one of the critical arguments against Haack’s idea of value-freedom developed in Chapter 2.<sup>251</sup> There are, in Harding’s words, “no grounds left from which to defend the claim that the objectivity of research is advanced by the elimination” of values (op.cit.: 146). “Instead”, she says, “the sciences need to legitimate *within scientific research*, as part of practicing science, critical examination” of the values that influence it (my emphasis, *ibid.*). Inquirers should subscribe to what she refers to as “historical relativism” or “cultural relativism (the sociological assertion that what is thought to be a reasonable claim in one society or subculture is not thought to be so in another)”, but not to “judgmental relativism”, “the claim that there are no rational or scientific grounds for making judgments between various patterns of belief” (op.cit.: 139, 152). We are, in Harding’s view, not to give up on “objectivity” in some sense (op.cit.: 138-163). Generally speaking, the latter is also my own position. Finally, I believe, like Harding, that there are moral “democratic”<sup>252</sup> reasons for treating women and men as equals, inside and outside inquiry: There are “liberatory” concerns involved (op.cit.: 148, 151). Granting women and men unequal cognitive authority in certain cases, if this is truth-functional, is compatible with granting women and men an equal moral standing. As noted by Helen Longino, equality of intellectual authority is compatible with “according greater cognitive authority on some matters to those one regards

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<sup>249</sup> There are for example theories, regarded as scientifically warranted, with sexist biases (see my references in Chapter 3). For sociological analysis of gender hierarchy in the academy, see for example Smith 1990 and Brooks 1997.

<sup>250</sup> Like Haack, Harding does not distinguish between values and norms, ethics and morality.

<sup>251</sup> See 2.2.2.

<sup>252</sup> Even if I find her explication of the term “intellectual participatory democracy” unclear (Harding 1991: 151).

as having acquired more knowledge concerning those matters than others” (2002a: 131).<sup>253</sup> If feminist standpoint epistemologists claim nothing more,<sup>254</sup> it is misleading to accuse Harding, as Haack does, for betraying the commitment to the equality that characterizes “democratic epistemologies”.<sup>255</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Why grant women epistemic privilege? Harding’s eight reasons

The question is whether those who ‘think from women’s lives’, to quote the subtitle of Harding’s book, know more about *all* matters; whether such thinking generally generates knowledge that is more probably significantly true than other kinds of thinking, because women are, generally speaking, oppressed. As pointed out by Haack, this idea is somewhat counter-intuitive: If women are oppressed, this does not seem like a good reason to grant them “epistemic privilege,” because “one of the ways in which oppressed people *are* oppressed is, surely, that their oppressors control the information that reaches them” (original emphasis, 1998: 126). Harding mentions eight “grounds” that point in the opposite direction.<sup>256</sup> None of them are without merit:

1) To the extent that “dominant knowledge claims [...] have been based primarily in the lives of men in the dominant races, classes, and cultures”, “[...] using women’s lives as grounds to criticize [...]”, “can decrease the partialities and distortions in the picture of nature and social life provided by the natural and the social sciences” (1991: 121). Consider in this connection Peirce’s characterization of truth as; “the ultimate representation, the Final Opinion, compatible with all possible experiential evidence and the fullest logical scrutiny, which would be agreed by all who investigate were inquiry to continue indefinitely”, subscribed to by Haack (1998: 162). According to this outline of truth, any systematic exclusion of “experiential evidence” provided by women, is a problem that should concern genuine truth-seekers. Not because the exclusion would necessarily make a difference in all cases, but because it may do so in some.<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>253</sup> See 2.4.5.

<sup>254</sup> But, as I will return to shortly, it seems to me that Harding claims something more.

<sup>255</sup> As though Haack suddenly considered democratic epistemologies defensible after all!

<sup>256</sup> For a full elaboration of these eight “grounds”, see Harding 1991: 121-137.

<sup>257</sup> There are several examples that the exclusion of women from scientific inquiry has made a difference. Let me mention one: In the first research project on Power and Democracy in Norway (1972-1982) no women were included in the research group and nothing was published on gender, power and democracy. In the second research project on Power and Democracy (1998-2003), two out of five in the research group were women (Siri

2) There are cases where “strangers” get to know things “natives” do not:

The stranger brings to her research just the combination of nearness and remoteness, concern and indifference, that are central to maximizing objectivity. Moreover, the natives tend to tell a stranger some kinds of things they would never tell each other; further, the stranger can see patterns of belief and behavior that are hard for those immersed in the culture to detect (Harding 1991: 124).

In so far as women are “outsiders to the dominant institutions in our society”, they might take cognitive advantage of being “strangers” in different settings (ibid.).

3) “Oppressed groups have”:

[...] fewer reasons to invest in maintaining or justifying the status quo than do dominant groups. They have less to lose by distancing themselves from the social order; thus, the perspective from their lives can more easily generate fresh and critical analyses (op.cit.: 126).

In so far as women constitute a group of the “oppressed”, they may be said to have an interest in providing “fresh and critical analyses” that “dominant groups” do not: In this sense it may be correct to say that “women’s oppression gives them fewer interests in ignorance” (op.cit.: 125).

4) Social and political struggles, including feminist struggles, may provide new knowledge: “We can come to understand hidden aspects of social relations [...] and the institutions that support these relations [...] through struggles to change them” (op.cit.: 127). Harding mentions an example: “[...] it is only because of the fierce struggles waged in the nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries to gain formal equality for women [...] that we can come to understand that formal equality is not enough” (ibid.). It was on the basis of such knowledge – which would not have been provided without such struggles – that feminist struggles were widened and re-oriented.<sup>258</sup>

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Meyer and Hege Skjeie), and several books and reports were published on gender, power and democracy. This is not say that interconnections between research interests and gender are simple and easily traceable. Meyer and Skjeie agree that gender is a significant topic of study, but work within highly different theoretical perspectives, on different problems. Their normative approach to power and democracy differ substantially, moreover (for a discussion of one of Skjeie’s arguments, see Chapter 8).

<sup>258</sup> Axel Honneth makes a similar point in *The Struggle for Recognition*. The modern struggle for “legally institutionalized relations of universal respect for the autonomy and dignity of persons” is conceptualized as a cognitive prerequisite for further struggles in “networks of solidarity and shared values within which the

5) Work that has traditionally been assigned to women provides its practitioners with a peculiar kind of original or genealogical insight:<sup>259</sup>

[...] women have been assigned to kinds of work that men in the ruling groups do not want to do, and women's work relieves these men of the need to take care of their bodies or of the local places where they exist, freeing them to immerse themselves in the world of abstract concepts. The labor of women articulates and shapes these men's concept of the world into those appropriate for administrative work (op.cit.: 128)

Thus, as practitioners of care work, women get to see the often invisible ground beneath the more visible layers of our social world: "Starting from the standpoint of women [...] enables us to recover the processes through which social life in fact has taken the form we see around us" (ibid.).

6) Care work also generates knowledge that does not easily fit into dominant dichotomous schemes of classification: "Women's perspective" comes from "mediating ideological dualisms: nature versus culture", "[...] intellectual work, on the one hand, and manual or emotional work, on the other hand": "Women's labor both for wages and even more in household production involves a unification of mind and body for the purpose of transforming natural substances into socially defined goods" (op.cit.: 130). Also, "the female experience of bearing and rearing children involves a unity of mind and body", and can generate such knowledge (op.cit.: 131).

7) Women might be strangers in the sense suggested – a position that provides them with the cognitive advantages of the stranger. Their social position could, however, just as equally be characterized as an "outsiders-within"-position (op.cit.: 131). They are not necessarily only on the outside of dominant activities and beliefs – and thus strangers – they might also participate at the same time as insiders. This double glance on things; "thinking out of the gap between the lives of outsiders and the lives of insiders and their favored conceptual schemes" (op.cit.: 132), might also be a cognitive resource.

8) The particular knowledge of women as 'outsiders-within', obviously requires that they are

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particular worth of individual members of a community can be acknowledged" (1995: xii): Formal equality was needed in order to know that formal equality was not enough.

<sup>259</sup> Harding elaborates this point on the basis of the feminist sociologist Dorothy Smith's reflections.

on the ‘inside’ as well. Recently, more women have become insiders, as the result of “shifts in the economy, by the so-called sexual revolution, by the increased entrance of women in higher education, by the civil rights struggles of the 1960s, and by other identifiable economic, political, and social phenomena” (ibid.). Thus, this is indeed “the right time in history” for the female outsider-within, and the things she may find out (ibid.).

Consequently, there is something in Harding’s eight grounds for considering ‘thinking from women’ lives’ to be truth-functional in various situations. Saying that ‘the feminist standpoint’ generally generates greater objectivity, as Harding seems to say, however, is to say something more.<sup>260</sup> Her ambition seems to be to correct *the truth-idealization* – or *the objectivity-idealization* if we stick to her own vocabulary – not merely to participate in a discussion about valuable heuristic devices in particular kinds of investigations.<sup>261</sup> I do not think she provides good arguments for this more radical move.<sup>262</sup>

Let me begin the explication of my position by emphasizing what a subscription to the eight grounds above does *not* imply:

1) It is not the case that experiential evidence provided by women is generally excluded from contemporary scientific representations, even if there are several examples. There are, however, also examples of exclusion of experiential evidence provided by men – typically by men who are not of the dominant races, classes and cultures. To be sure, if certain groups, the group of women or other groups, are excluded from inquiry, this is a reason to suspect that there are cases of partialities and distortions in the picture of nature and social life, since this allows for experiential evidence generated from certain points of view to be excluded. However, whether the inclusion of experiential evidence generated from these points of view

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<sup>260</sup> Sometimes she writes as if she did not intend to claim something more. Elizabeth Anderson (2004) put much weight on this fact in a recent attempt to save Harding from her critics. On other occasions, Harding claims, however, considerably more. Also, if Harding did not claim anything more, it is unclear why she positions her ‘thinking from women’s lives’ as an epistemological alternative (I will return to this point in later sections of this chapter). The latter is not commented upon by Anderson.

<sup>261</sup> This is, however, how Anderson describes her project: “If one’s aim is to produce knowledge that is useful to the marginalized in overcoming their systematic disadvantages”, Harding argues that one should “frame one’s research questions, devise one’s theoretical classifications, and so forth, with this aim in mind” (2004: 6). It is hardly obvious why we should refer to this position (a position many would subscribe to) as feminist standpoint epistemology.

<sup>262</sup> To avoid misunderstandings: I do not subscribe to what Harding refers to as the ‘weak’ notion of objectivity. This notion is linked to an idea of value-freedom cruder than the one Haack defends, and, as already suggested, I do not think many philosophers today subscribe to it. We need rather a different notion of objectivity in inquiry – but not the ‘strong’ notion Harding defends, equating ‘thinking from women’s life’ with what is objective.

would make the representations significantly different – and whether, if different, it would make the representations more objective in particular cases – cannot generally be assumed. This is, rather, something that needs to be established from case to case on the basis of investigation. There is a huge difference between the claim that women’s participation in science might change certain theories, and the claim that their participation would necessarily change them all.

2) Not all women could be positioned as strangers in the sense suggested by Harding. Some should, as she herself suggests, be considered to be outsiders-within. And some should, rather, be considered to be natives; insiders of the dominant institutions in our society. And most are perhaps both strangers, natives and outsiders-within – on different occasions. Moreover, it cannot be assumed generally that the claims of a stranger are more valid than the claims of a native. Obviously, those who participate in and identify with a practice as natives, may know something of this practice that those who do not participate in it or identify with it, do not.

3) Women are not always oppressed, and when they are, they are not necessarily oppressed equally strongly, and in the same way. Furthermore, groups of women might oppress other groups of women, and also groups of men, for example men who do not belong to the dominant races, classes and cultures. Hence, some women are sometimes and, in some senses, in the dominant groups. These women would not have a general interest in criticizing the status quo or in distancing themselves from the social order. Also, when such interests can be traced, it cannot generally be assumed that their analyses are more objective. This is a matter for critical scrutiny in the reason-giving and reason-taking processes of inquiry.

4) New significant questions, new vocabularies and classifications occur through social and political struggles, and so too new answers: Social and political struggles can contribute to changing established theories, and contribute to establishing new ones. The connections between feminist social and political struggles and contributions to genuine inquiry from feminist researchers are, however, but one example of this. Similar connections can be established between, for example, the struggles of the workers’ movement and inquiry inspired by the normative horizon of these struggles. Moreover, the questions, vocabularies and classifications generated through political and social struggles are not necessarily the only significant ones – and perhaps some of them are not very significant at all. As pointed out by



Jürgen Habermas:<sup>263</sup> Genuine inquiry can be pursued from the point of view of significant knowledge interests other than the interest in emancipation – granted that all kinds of political and social struggles, in the name of feminism or other -isms, can be justified from the point of view of emancipation. The latter is, however, not necessarily the case. Harding falsely assumes that all struggles presenting themselves as struggles for “emancipation” are justified or are, as she vaguely puts it, “progressive” (op.cit.: 161). This is, however, something we should investigate critically and deliberate upon. And finally, theories defended by those who have participated in or been inspired by feminist struggles – or indeed other struggles – are not necessarily more objective. This needs to be established on the basis of reasons in processes of genuine theory assessment.

5) Care work might provide the practitioners with new significant knowledge. However, not all women participate in this kind of work. And if they do, this participation may influence their points of view more or less persuasively. And in the end, the knowledge of the care-taker, female or not, cannot be considered to be more objective without further argument.

6) Care work, whether carried out by women or not, may generate knowledge that might not easily fit into dominant dichotomous schemes of classification. Some of it may, however. Moreover, dichotomous schemes may have analytical relevance while approaching other practices and phenomena.<sup>264</sup> And the fact that a representation is not dualist, does not in itself make it either true or significant.

7) Not all women should be considered to be outsiders-within, on all occasions and in a similar way. They might, for example, be the stranger Harding sketches (in 2) – or a more or less complete native. And from none of these positions can their claims be considered to be less partial and distorted initially, without further investigation and critical scrutiny.

8) As a result of social and cultural changes, feminist political struggles, redescriptions and arguments, there may now be more women who could be considered to be outsiders-within, and who can provide experiential evidence from this position. However, the case remains to be made that the claims of the outsider-within are always more objective than the claims of those differently situated. The fact that more inquirers can now be so positioned, since more

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<sup>263</sup> His theory of knowledge interests is presented briefly in Chapter 2.

<sup>264</sup> For an illuminating critique of uncritical feminist critique of dichotomies, see Nancy Fraser (1998).

women entered public institutions, such as science, yet are still experiencing peculiar kinds of gender injustice, neither strengthens nor weakens this burden of proof.

Hence, to sum up, there are, generally speaking, two separate questions (or sets of questions) involved here. First, do all women have something in common? Are all women excluded (1), strangers (2), oppressed (3), struggling (4), care-workers (5), in situations generating non-dualist perspectives (6), outsiders-within (7), or on their way to becoming outsiders-within (8)? Do women in fact share a standpoint or a social situation? Second, does what women have in common – if they do in fact have something in common – make their theories less partial and distorted? And if their theories are less partial, how is this so? Why should the fact that society is persuasively gender-stratified, in the sense suggested by Harding, make us want to correct the truth-idealization? And what, more specifically, would the corrections be?

That all women can be positioned in a similar social situation is a claim that is hard to substantiate empirically. Harding argues, convincingly, only that some women are in a more or less similar social situation (as specified in 1) to 8). This has implications for how genuine cultural and social studies of inquiry can be pursued. In such studies, Harding's (and similar) description of the gendered character of knowledge production cannot be taken as a universal description (and if it could, it would be fallible as any other description). The precise relationship between gender and knowledge production in different situations must be established on the basis of investigation. Also, to what extent a gendered organization of knowledge production causes discrepancy between warrant and social acceptance in particular cases, cannot be presupposed. In fact, this could not even be presupposed if Harding's description of the relationship between gender and knowledge production were universal: It may be argued that a gendered organization of society and inquiry of a kind described in 1) to 8) will create sexist and androcentric biases in knowledge production – there are many cases that prove that patriarchal norms have hampered genuine inquiry – but this needs to be investigated case by case.

### **4.2.3 Women's different reasoning**

Let us say, however, that it could be argued that all women share a standpoint that is different from the standpoint of men so that it makes sense to refer to it generally as women's standpoint. How would this influence our answers to the second set of questions? First, one

would have to say something about how a perhaps valid but anyhow fallible empirical theory could possibly correct an infallible counterfactually anticipated truth-idealization. Even if the truth-idealization is counterfactual, it nevertheless presupposes the validity of certain empirical claims, however. In explicating the truth-idealization we talk about genuine inquirers as human beings with certain empirically identifiable capabilities, for example the capability to perceive and evaluate evidence in reason-giving and reason-taking processes.<sup>265</sup>

What Harding seems to suggest is that the social situation of women in a gender-stratified society structures not only what women experience, but also how they experience it (op.cit.: 123). What gives women a privileged cognitive authority is not only that they perceive different things and can bring different reasons into the reason-giving and reason-taking-process of inquiry, because of how they are socially situated, but also that their perceiving and reasoning are done in a different way: Due to their social situation, women have particular capabilities as inquirers that make their inquiry more genuine. How does Harding picture this? Women's and men's different social situations give men and women different "personality structures" (op.cit.: 121):

Jane Flax and other writers<sup>266</sup> who draw on object relations theory point to the less defensive structure of femininity than of masculinity. Different infantile experiences, reinforced throughout life, lead men to perceive their masculinity as a fragile phenomenon that they must continually struggle to defend and maintain. In contrast, women perceive femininity as a much sturdier part of their "self". Stereotypically, real women appear as if provided by nature; real men appear as a fragile social construct. Of course, 'typical' feminine and masculine personality structures are different in different classes, races and cultures. But insofar as they are different from each other, it deteriorates objectivity to devalue or ignore what can be learned by starting research from the perspective provided by women's personality structures (ibid.).

It is "the perspective provided by women's personality structure" that produces greater "objectivity" (ibid.). Now, what Harding could be saying here is, simply, that men's and women's different social situation (as specified in 1) to 8) above) cause different personality structures to arise, creating in turn differences in cognitive authority between women and men, because different personality structures make women and men perceive different things and bring different reasons into the reason-giving and reason-taking-processes. However, she

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<sup>265</sup> Consider the reflections in Chapter 2 on *conditio humana* (Otfried Höffe). Consider also the outline of the conditions of individuation (Drucilla Cornell) in Chapter 9.

<sup>266</sup> She refers here to Hilary Rose, Nancy Hartsock, Jane Flax and Dorothy Smith.

seems to be saying something more. The difference in personality structure should, she says, be thought of in terms of “different modes of reasoning” (op.cit.: 122). She exemplifies:

Sara Ruddick draws our attention to the ‘maternal thinking’ that is characteristic of people (male or female) who have primary responsibility for the care of small children. Carol Gilligan identifies those forms of moral reasoning typically found in women’s thought but not found in the dominant Western rights orientation of ethics. And Mary Belenky and her colleagues<sup>267</sup> argue that women’s ways of knowing exhibit more generally the concern for context that Gilligan sees in moral knowledge (ibid).

This is to say that there are “distinctively female ways of knowing” (Haack 1998: 125); peculiar female ways of “figuring out how things are” (op.cit.: 126), understood in terms of a different way of reasoning with more “concern for context” (Harding 1991: 122). Hence, it is the ability to evaluate in processes of reason-giving and reason-taking that differs between women and men. This could be thought of as a different capability, or, more modestly, as two modes of the same capability.

#### **4.2.4 Should women’s different reasoning grant them cognitive privilege?**

Even if this is correct, however, this does not imply that we should change the truth-idealization. It has, first, to be argued that the female way of knowing produces more objective knowledge. Harding’s argument is inconclusive on this point. Even if it could be argued that women reason with more concern for context, why should contextual reasoning make women’s theories more genuine? What does it mean more precisely to reason with concern for context, and what does it mean, precisely, when confronted by different kinds of claims?

Initially, Harding’s idea of reasoning with concern for context is linked to how we should approach moral and ethical claims. She refers to Gilligan’s analysis of “moral reasoning” and Ruddick’s “maternal thinking” of “responsibility” (ibid.). The prescription to have a concern for context when we reason about morality and ethics, would, however, have implications for our approach to inquiry in so far as morality and ethics are involved when we make inquiries – but would not necessarily have implications for how genuine inquirers should approach truth-claims. Harding thinks that it has, however. She refers in this connection to among

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<sup>267</sup> “Mary Belenky and her colleagues, in investigating developmental patterns in women’s thinking about reason and knowledge, have pointed to gender bias in philosophic and scientific ideals and suggested its origins in gendered experience” (Harding 1991: 118).

others Jane Flax and Mary Belenky who argue that “women’s ways of knowing exhibit more generally the concern for context that Gilligan sees in moral knowledge”, and that this is connected with men’s and women’s different “personality structures” (ibid.): Women’s ways of knowing “produce empirically more accurate descriptions and theoretically richer explanations” (op.cit.: 119).

Harding does not explicate what reasoning with concern for context might mean in empirical discourse, however. Moreover, she does not specify how reasoning with concern for context in empirical discourse might differ from reasoning in the domain of morality and ethics. This is linked to a general failure in her approach: She does not link her philosophy of inquiry to reflections on the different claims involved in inquiry. This is why, when she talks of objectivity, she sometimes seems to refer to empirical truth,<sup>268</sup> and at other times, to the validity of claims more generally. I wish to concentrate on what reasoning with concern for context might mean in empirical discourse. This is clearly Harding’s basic concern: She wants to *add* something to epistemology in the spirit of the feminist interventions which have taken place in moral philosophy which stress the concern for context.

Reasoning with concern for context in empirical discourse could mean, for example:

- i) That we should investigate theories (claims in the context of other claims), not singular claims.
- ii) That we should avoid idealizations.
- iii) That we should avoid abstraction.
- iv) That explanans cannot or should not refer to causal laws or mechanisms.
- v) That there is a need for discretion and good contextual judgment when approaching particular cases.

If we by reasoning with concern for context mean i), not even Haack would disagree that we are dealing with the thinking that produces maximal objectivity. Contextual reasoning in this sense is precisely what genuine inquiry should be about; to assess claims in connection with other claims is a core idea of her crossword puzzle model of inquiry. Moreover, even Haack would not deny that we should avoid idealizations (ii), as in the sense discussed by Onora

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<sup>268</sup> This is why I have so far, in this spirit, interpreted Harding’s ideal of objectivity as a challenge to the truth-idealization.

O'Neill,<sup>269</sup> i.e. idealizations as “abstractions” that are not “abstractions from empirical truth” (2000: 72). O'Neill exemplifies her notion of an idealization with the model of “Rational Economic Man”, relying, she says, on “an instrumental account of rationality and a preference-based conception of action” (op.cit.: 71, 73). This is in accordance with what I argued in Chapter 2: that rational-choice theory<sup>270</sup> is not a valid empirical theory, assessed according to, for example, Haack's foundherentist criteria. This is to say that the model of human action on which Haack herself relies is an idealization incompatible with her own criteria for genuine inquiry, criteria which are contextual in the sense that idealizations would be considered pseudo-theories and not allowed for.

As for iii), we cannot avoid abstraction altogether: Any conceptualization involves abstraction on some level.<sup>271</sup> In O'Neill's words: We cannot avoid reasoning that “brackets certain predicates that obtain”, even if we can and should avoid idealization; reasoning that “denies those predicates (asserts their absence) or asserts that absent predicates obtain” (op.cit.: 68). Does Harding argue that explanans cannot or should not refer to causal laws or mechanisms (i.e. iv)?<sup>272</sup> Sometimes it seems as though she does.<sup>273</sup> However, her argument that women have a peculiar concern for context in their reasoning because of a certain personality structure, is presented, in fact, in terms of a causal model: “Different infantile experiences [...] *lead*” to women's and men's fundamentally different relationship to “self” (my emphasis, Harding 1991: 121).<sup>274</sup> As for v), even Haack acknowledges the need for discretion or good contextual judgment, even in the context of justification.

Hence, Harding's claim that reasoning with concern for context is what produces maximal objectivity, is either uncontroversial (i), (ii) and v), in the sense that even Haack would accept

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<sup>269</sup> O'Neill introduces the distinction between idealization and abstraction in a discussion of moral reasoning. The point also has relevance here, however.

<sup>270</sup> At least not as the theory is presented by Haack.

<sup>271</sup> See point 6) above, where Harding discusses how women's activities mediate the divisions and separations in contemporary Western cultures. This might mean that women rely on fewer divisions or separations or avoid them altogether, or that women would construct different divisions or separations. The first interpretation relies on an impossible presupposition that abstraction can be avoided. The latter interpretation is an empirical question.

<sup>272</sup> And are there differences between the natural, social and human sciences on this point? Part II (“Explanation, Prediction, and Laws”) and III (“Interpretation and Meaning”) in *Readings in the Philosophy of Social Science* (1995) give an overview of this classic debate among philosophers of science. Anderson doubts that feminist standpoint epistemologists consider it relevant to apply the standpoint approach in the natural sciences (2004: 6). Harding makes, however, no such reservations.

<sup>273</sup> Consider for example the chapter “Why Physics is a Bad Model for Physics” in Harding (1991: 77-104).

<sup>274</sup> A critical reflection on the role of causal mechanisms in object relations is found in Gilje and Grimen (1993: 253).

it, and in the sense that it is compatible with the truth-idealization as I spelled it out in Chapter 2, or it is inconsistent (iv), or it presupposes what is impossible (iii). It therefore seems either misleading to say that concern for context is a different mode of reasoning (if this is understood as in i), ii) and v), or it is a different mode of reasoning that is flawed (if ‘concern for context’ is understood as in iii) and iv).

Now, what Harding might be saying, is rather that women do i), ii) and v) *better* than men; they are better at avoiding idealization, they use good judgment better, and they are better at connecting the assessment of singular claims with the assessment of other singular claims (in Haack’s terms: they take better care of the ‘coherentist’ aspect of genuine inquiry). Initially, such claim are dubious because not all women are in women’s situation (defined according to Harding’s 1) to 8) list). They are, however, also dubious because the causal mechanisms between being in this situation – if it indeed could be argued that many if not all women were in it – and a particular contextual rationality are only vaguely explicated. Hence, Haack’s statement that Harding’s notion of “thinking like a woman” reminds her of “old, sexist stereotypes”, is not completely irrelevant (Haack 1998: 125): The idea that women think differently, and do it with more concern for context could be mistaken for a patriarchal caricature.

#### **4.2.5 From unequal cognitive authority to unequal intellectual authority**

Even if giving some people (for example women) greater cognitive authority in some cases is compatible with granting everyone equal intellectual authority, this is only so under certain conditions. One condition for compatibility between unequal cognitive authority (in some cases) and equal intellectual authority, is that one does not in fact *argue* against granting everyone equal intellectual authority, and thus against the norm of equal respect. One cannot accuse Harding of doing this. She does, however, tend to instrumentalize the relationship between inquiry and morality. Harding argues that “research directed by maximally liberatory social interests and values tends to be better equipped to identify partial claims and distorting evidence”; “[...] to produce empirically more accurate descriptions and theoretically richer explanations” (Harding 1991: 119, 148): Certain liberating interests and values (i.e. taking women’s standpoint) are presented as functional for the aim of making theories more objective and less partial, whereas it is simply presupposed that these interests and values are justified from a moral point of view (ibid.). However, interests and values that are truth-

functional, are not necessarily compatible with what justice requires, i.e. that they are compatible, cannot be presupposed; it must be argued.<sup>275</sup>

Moreover, to say that female truth-seekers are generally epistemologically privileged relative to male, i.e. to say that there are always cognitive inequalities between women and men, is incompatible with granting everyone equal intellectual authority (and if one argues that everyone is equal in intellectual authority, one contradicts oneself if one upholds the standpoint approach to issues of truth). Certainly, one might imagine more or less drastic implications drawn from Harding's claim that women, because of their social situation, produce more accurate descriptions and theoretically richer explanations than men, i.e. more or less radical transformations of the truth-idealization. The implication could be that what we should strive to approximate in our investigations, is an ideal communication community consisting only of women, because theories proposed by men (and by women who, for one reason or another, are not in women's situation) are always less genuine. This would be to argue for unequal cognitive authority *and* unequal intellectual authority; men would not be considered among reason-givers and reason-takers. Harding does, however, clearly consider men among reason-givers and reason-takers. She stresses that also male inquirers can think from women's lives (op.cit.: 62, 67, 68).

A less drastic option would be to include men (and women who, for one reason or another, are not in women's situation) in the ideal communication community, but to consider the epistemological privilege of women (in women's situation) an additional criterion of truth-indicativeness, in addition to other criteria, such as Haack's foundherentist criteria. Let us say, in addition to criteria of supportiveness, independent security and comprehensiveness,<sup>276</sup> there was a fourth criterion: It is a truth-indication that a theory is compatible with the claims made by women (whatever they were). Also, this more moderate reconstruction of the truth-idealization would, however, be incompatible with granting everyone equal intellectual authority. Men would also be considered reason-givers and reason-takers, but of a secondary sort: Adding the fourth criterion would make it defensible to replace a theory more warranted

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<sup>275</sup> Harding also tends to instrumentalize the other way around: We should make our theories more objective and less partial because objective theories are functional for liberation, not because significant truth is the sole aim of inquiry. It is illustrative in this connection that Harding refers to feminist standpoint epistemology – and other feminist epistemologies (feminist empiricism and feminist postmodernism) as different “justificatory *strategies* [...] likely to appeal to different audiences” (my emphasis, Harding 1991: 136). This notion of theoretical justification is similar to Richard Rorty's notion of “justification is relative to audience”, which I question in Chapter 7. See also Chapter 2.

<sup>276</sup> See the outline of foundherentism in Chapter 1.



according to the first three criteria with a theory somewhat less warranted according to the three first criteria, but fulfilling the fourth criterion (women preferred it, for whatever reason). There is thus a moral problem connected with this move. In addition there is, as suggested, an epistemological problem:<sup>277</sup> Why does women's situation make them privileged reasoners in all cases? Why is adding this fourth criterion generally truth-functional, i.e. what is the epistemological justification for transforming the truth-idealization?

To consider women's epistemological privilege as a more or less well-founded hypothesis to be scrutinized by men and women as equal reason-givers and reason-takers, is to subscribe to a norm of equal intellectual authority. This would imply, however, that women's privilege would not in fact be considered as general; the privilege would be granted if there were good enough reasons to do so, and would not imply any reconstruction of the truth-idealization. The prescription would, rather, be in accordance with the truth-idealization as elaborated in Chapter 2, and it is unclear why one would refer to it as a prescription of an alternative (feminist standpoint) epistemology.

#### **4.2.6 From women's reasoning to women's emotions?**

Harding might argue, however, that women's peculiar concern for context should not be considered a separate mode of reasoning in a literal sense, i.e. not as I have outlined it so far, as *reasoning*, and, hence, not as a unique capability women possess as reason-givers and reason-takers. Rather women's situation produces certain objectivity-functional *emotions*. Consider the following passage:

One could argue also that the particular forms of any emotion that women experience as an oppressed, exploited, and dominated gender have a distinctive content that is missing from all those parallel forms in their brothers' emotional lives. Consider suffering, for example. A woman suffers not only as a parent of a dying child, as a child of sick parents, as a poor person, or as a victim of racism. Women suffer in ways peculiar to *mothers* of dying children, to *daughters* of sick parents, to poor *women*, and in the special ways the racist policies and practices affect *women's* lives. Mother, daughter, poor woman, and racially oppressed woman are nodes of historically specific social practices and social meanings that mediate when and how suffering occurs for such socially constructed persons. Women's pleasures, angers, and other emotions too are in part distinctive to their social activities and identities as historically

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<sup>277</sup> See 4.2.3 and 4.2.4.

determinate women, and these provide a missing portion of the human lives that human knowledge is supposed to be both grounded in and about (original emphasis, *op.cit.*: 122).<sup>278</sup>

To say that women possess certain socially constituted objectivity-functional emotions, could be considered an empirical hypothesis to be investigated case by case in processes of reason-giving and reason-taking among women and men with equal intellectual authority. This would imply no change in the truth-idealization (and no alternative feminist standpoint epistemology). Another option would be to add to our truth-criteria, for example the three foundherentist criteria, a fourth criterion: It is a truth-indication that a theory is compatible with women's emotions (whatever they are). How could such a compatibility be established? Probably one would have to listen to what women themselves claimed to be a theory compatible with their emotions. However, this would be the same as adding a fourth criterion which says that it is a truth-indication that a theory is compatible with the claims made by women (whatever they are),<sup>279</sup> i.e. this is in fact to say that women have a special capability as reason-givers and reason-takers, due to their emotional constitution, and that this should grant them a general epistemological privilege. This position is, however, morally as well as epistemologically problematic.<sup>280</sup>

#### **4.2.7 When women claim different things**

To add this fourth criterion; to claim that it is a truth-indication that a theory is compatible with the claims made by women (whatever these are), is problematic, moreover, because of the criterion's indeterminate character. The indeterminacy problem arises in situations where women (in women's situation) claim different theories to be genuine theories. Which women would we listen to? The logic of the standpoint argument suggests that it might be the women who best fit the eight descriptions of 'women's lives', for example the most oppressed women. The problem would remain, however, were we confronted with conflicting claims among the most oppressed.

In other passages – that I will return to in the next section – Harding argues that it is not women, but rather feminists, who produce the most objective knowledge. The problem of

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<sup>278</sup> What Harding says here in this last sentence, is something much weaker than what is implied by her standpoint argument. I discuss this argument.

<sup>279</sup> If one were to argue instead that another group knew better what women's emotions were, this would be to argue that it is a truth-indication that a theory is compatible with what members of the groups knowing what women's emotions are claim (whatever they claim).

<sup>280</sup> As explicated in 4.2.3, 4.2.4 and 4.2.5.

indeterminacy still remains, however, because feminists do not agree among themselves, as Harding herself recognizes; “[...] there are many feminisms” (op.cit.: 123). Which of them should be allowed to settle the case? My suggestion would be that the case should be settled with reference to the best truth-indicative criteria available in reason-giving and reason-taking processes where all participants are granted equal intellectual authority.

#### **4.2.8 From women’s standpoint to feminist standpoint**

Harding may try to refute several of my critical remarks by denying that she claims that all women are in a similar social situation, have the same experience, the same personality structure, and that they reason or feel in a particular similar way. An important ambition for Harding in *Whose Science, Whose Knowledge?* is to refute the claim coming from “feminist postmodernism” (op.cit.: 165), that her standpoint theory rests on an essentialist notion of women: “Standpoint theories need not commit essentialism. *The Science Question in Feminism*<sup>281</sup> contributed to such a misreading of their logic; in this book I contest an essentialist reading” (op.cit.: 121). Harding argues against nominalist as well as realist essentialism: What the term woman means, as well as the material basis of women’s experiences, are relative to social situation and historical change.<sup>282</sup> Consider again a few sentences from the passage on women’s peculiar personality structure quoted above:

Of course, typical feminine and masculine personality structures are different in different classes, races, and cultures. But insofar as they are different from each other, it deteriorates objectivity to devalue or ignore what can be learned by starting research from the perspective provided by women’s personality structures (op.cit.: 121-122).

This way of approaching the issue is typical: There are differences between women’s and men’ experiences, *in addition to* what might be of empirical (in-group) differences in women’s and men’s experiences. Moreover, according to Harding, there are such differences between women’s and men’s experiences (in addition to the in-group differences), due to empirical differences in social situation (as specified in the eight points above). Since such differences should not be considered essential, but rather empirical, the validity of these

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<sup>281</sup> One of Harding’s previous books.

<sup>282</sup> On what essentialism implies, see also Chapter 7.

claims rests on whether they are empirically warranted or not (and not on a defense of essentialism).<sup>283</sup>

However, Harding's case is not saved by her attempt to replace "the standpoint of women" with "the standpoint of feminism" (op.cit.: 121). She says:

[...] while both women's experiences and what women say certainly are good places to begin generating research projects [...], they would not seem to be reliable grounds for deciding just which claims to knowledge are preferable. For a position to count as a standpoint, [...] we must insist on an objective location – women's lives – as the place from which feminist research should begin. We would not know to value that location so highly if women had not insisted on the importance of their experiences and voices [...]. But it is not the experiences or the speech that provides the grounds for feminist claims; it is rather the subsequently articulated observations of and theory about the rest of nature and social relations – observations and theory that start out from, that look at the world from the perspective of, women's lives. And who is to do this starting out? With this question it becomes clear that knowledge-seeking requires democratic, participatory politics. Otherwise, only the gender, race, sexuality, and class elites who now predominate in institutions of knowledge-seeking will have the chance to decide how to start asking their research questions, and we are entitled to suspicion about the historic location from which those questions will in fact be asked. It is important both to value women's experiences and speech and also to be able to specify carefully their exact role in the production of feminist knowledge (op.cit.: 123-124).

The main reason why some thinkers have interpreted Harding as saying "that standpoint theories and other kinds of justifications of feminist knowledge claims must be grounded in women's *experiences*" (my emphasis, op.cit.: 123), that it is in fact women's common experiences that produce epistemological privilege, is that this is what she seems to say.<sup>284</sup> Consider, for example, her argument from situation to experience, to personality structure, to mode of reasoning or emotional constitution (outlined in 4.2.4 and 4.2.6). Even in the passage above, where Harding argues for a feminist standpoint (in contrast to women's standpoint), the subtext is that there is in fact something particularly and generally cognitively valuable arising from women's experiences; "women's experiences and what women say [...] are good places to begin generating research projects", and "we would not know to value that location [an objective location – women's lives] so highly if women had not insisted on the importance of their experiences and voices" (ibid.). Her comments here may, of course, be interpreted as a reminder to listen to what women have to say as we listen to what men have to say, a

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<sup>283</sup> As suggested, Harding does not argue convincingly that these claims are warranted as empirical claims about *all* women's situation and experiences, even though the descriptions, or some of them, may be warranted descriptions of many women's situation and experiences.

<sup>284</sup> Anderson (2004) bases her rescue of Harding on the assumption that Harding cannot possibly be interpreted as saying this. I think, on the contrary, it is very hard to avoid such an interpretation.

reminder necessitated by a patriarchal tradition that has not granted women equal intellectual authority, but instead marginalized the perceptions and reasons of women. Such a reminder does not, however, challenge the truth-idealization; why talk of a different notion of ‘objectivity’ and ‘epistemology’, if Harding claims nothing more than this?

It makes better sense to interpret her as saying precisely “that standpoint theories and other kinds of justifications of feminist knowledge claims must be grounded in women’s *experiences*” (my emphasis, *ibid.*). She says indeed that “feminist knowledge claims”, which are privileged, are the outcome of *a critical reflection on* “women’s experiences”, in particular on how these experiences are “shaped by social relations” (*ibid.*). Objectivity, says Harding, is not simply provided by paraphrasing “the actual perspective of actual women – what they can in fact see” (*ibid.*). But “the actual perspective of actual women” remains as the privileged general starting point for “learning” (*ibid.*). In this passage, Harding does not deny, however, that *all* should participate in the learning-processes directing us towards feminist objectivity; there is, she says, a need for “democratic, participatory politics” (*op.cit.*: 124). But she does suggest a transformation of the truth-idealization where (once more) a new questionable criterion of truth-indicativeness is added: It is an indication of truth that a theory is compatible with claims that are based on critical learning from women’s experiences (whatever these claims are). This way of elaborating women’s cognitive authority may thus be compatible with granting all equal intellectual authority (i.e. all may participate as equals in the democratic process of learning from ‘women’s lives’). It is, however, unclear, why this criterion would be a truth-functional criterion. The reason may be, of course, that women’s situation after all produce epistemological privilege, i.e. that this is why learning from it, critically; as a feminist, produce epistemological privilege. If this is in fact what is claimed in the end, Harding’s position is (once more) incompatible with granting all equal intellectual authority.

#### **4.2.9 What is a woman?**

Furthermore, it is not clear why adding a criterion saying that it is an indication of truth that a theory is compatible with critical learning from the experience of those in a social situation which possess the characteristics mentioned in the 1) to 8) list above, represents a thinking from ‘*women’s lives*’ exclusively. It may be that many women are in situations which possess some, more or perhaps all of these characteristics. Other groups may, however, be in

situations which possess several of the similar characteristics. For example, as Harding notes herself, in “the U.S social order [...], unemployed African American and Hispanic men” may be more marginalized, excluded and oppressed than “economically privileged white women” (op.cit.: 125). Does not her feminist epistemology imply that genuine theories are those compatible with critical learning from the experience of any group in the social situation of ‘women’s lives’? If Harding is to deny this implication without contradicting herself, she would have to argue that women have certain particular common experiences that are not due to their social situation, but that are due to other things, they may, for example, be biologically founded.<sup>285</sup> Some of her reflections on women’s experiences as mothers suggest an argument of this sort. Harding may, however, agree that what she wants to add is a criterion saying that it is an indication of truth that a theory is compatible with critical learning from the experience of all those in a social situation similar to the social situation of ‘women’s lives’ – not only from the experience of *women* leading ‘women’s lives’. But then it is not clear why we should call the epistemology feminist, instead of, for example, socialist or multiculturalist,<sup>286</sup> in other words Haack’s challenge concerning what is *specifically* feminist in feminist epistemology would remain unaddressed.

#### **4.2.10 Women’s oppression as truth-functional?**

Finally, Harding fails to face up to the dilemma connected with her standpoint argument. The argument that women’s social situation – or critical learning from women’s social situation – is truth-functional, relies on a description of women’s situation in a gender-hierarchical society, from which she, at the same time, says women should be emancipated, because the gender hierarchy is unjust. There seems thus to be a conflict between creating a gender-just society – where women are no longer excluded, strangers, oppressed, outsiders-within and so on and so forth – and what is truth-functional. Hence, whereas Harding in some passages argue that what is truth-functional is what is liberating, and the other way around (see 4.2.6), the general logic of her standpoint argument draws in fact in the opposite direction.

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<sup>285</sup> Which is compatible with her denial of essentialism, if the biological explanation is based on an empirically warranted theory without essentialist assumptions.

<sup>286</sup> Why call *feminist* an epistemology constructed to avoid the fact that “only the gender, race, sexuality, and class elites who now predominate in institutions of knowledge-seeking [...] have the chance to decide how to start asking their research questions” (op.cit.: 124)? There are many similar passages in *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*.

### 4.3 Concluding remarks

The feminist standpoint epistemologists have tried to argue that epistemology should in fact embody “some *specifically* feminist insight” (original emphasis, Haack 1998: 119); insights that are more than implications of the argument for the ‘democratization’ of epistemology. Sandra Harding’s proposal of a feminist standpoint epistemology has problems of an empirical kind attached to it (her descriptions of ‘women’s lives’ are not valid descriptions of all women’s lives, or only of women’s lives). It is also not clear why thinking from ‘women’s lives’, whatever that might mean more specifically, is truth-functional in all cases. Finally, standpoint epistemology’s prescriptions of cognitive inequality among inquirers seem hard to combine with a commitment to a norm of equal intellectual authority: Harding’s proposal has also problems of a moral kind attached to it. Thus, if epistemology should in fact be developed in a specifically feminist direction, it cannot be along the lines suggested by Harding’s standpoint argument.

## **PART II**

# **Feminism in a State Feminist System**



## CHAPTER 5

# FEMINIST CRITIQUE: THE NORWEGIAN CASE

### 5.0 “[...] intense discussions about modernity”

In her introduction to the anthology *Kjønnenes møte med det moderne*<sup>287</sup> the literary scholar Irene Iversen places the assessment of “modernity” at the core of contemporary feminist discussions (1999a: 1):

Since the end of the 1960s there have been intense discussions about modernity in philosophy, historical research and sociological theory. The discussion reflects the view that modernity can no longer be perceived as a pure regime of progress or reason. Since the early 1980s there have been sharp confrontations between postmodernists and defenders of modernity. While the postmodernists have criticized and even dismissed the project of enlightenment and universalization, the theorists of modernity, led by the German sociologist Jürgen Habermas, have claimed that the dismissal of modernity implies that the ideals of equality and autonomy as well as the possibility in principle of reflection and a self-conscious practice has been thrown overboard. As far as feminism is concerned, the critique of modernity has come from different sources and it has been lively and multifaceted. We are talking about a long tradition of feminist thinking that has consisted of many different debates and covered many different topics. We find a feminist critique of modernity already in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, while it becomes particularly strong by the beginning of the twentieth-century. It can be seen as a reaction against the exclusion of women in modern political thinking and as a defense against the attack from rationalism and individualism on women’s lifeworld. Today the feminist critique of modernity comes, basically, from two camps, from postmodern and from communitarian feminism. What unites them is the articulation of a critical analysis of modern self-understanding, whether expressed through liberal rights thinking, built on the idea of the abstract and autonomous subject, or linked to Kantian moral philosophy (op.cit.: 1-2).<sup>288</sup>

Thus, the thinking of modernity, ‘the modern self-understanding’, as it is depicted by Iversen; the thinking of liberals, Kant and Habermas, is a thinking that conceptualizes the self as disembodied and disembedded, emphasizes the capacities of human reason, considers the development from pre-modern to modern society in terms of progress or ‘enlightenment’, and defends universal principles of autonomy and equality.

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<sup>287</sup> *The Gendered Encounter with Modernity*. The translations from Norwegian in this chapter, as well as in Chapters 6, 8 and 9, are my own. I wish to thank participants on seminars at the Center for the Study of the Sciences and the Humanities and in the dr.polit.-group at the Department of Sociology, University of Bergen, Gunnar Skrbekk, Roberto Gargarella and Anders Molander for comments.

<sup>288</sup> Iversen develops her analysis of the project of modernity in Iversen and Rønning (1996) and in Iversen (1995, 1996, 1999b, 2004).

What Iversen refers to as the modern self-understanding, is what Jürgen Habermas (1985) has defended as “the project of modernity”.<sup>289</sup> In Chapters 1 to 4 I myself defend a feminism within the normative horizon of modernity.<sup>290</sup> To do so is controversial. Several commentators, Norwegian<sup>291</sup> and others<sup>292</sup>, have described the basic topic of controversy in contemporary feminism in similar terms as Iversen – as a debate on the merits of modernity. In fact, feminism is, unfortunately, very often presented as a critique of modern thought.<sup>293</sup> However, there are feminists who stand up for the modern imaginary;<sup>294</sup> who are unconvinced by some, or even most, of the critique put forward.<sup>295</sup> In this chapter I will elaborate fifteen arguments against the thinking of modernity that have been circulating in academic-feminist debates in Norway during the past decade, and the discussions of these arguments.

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<sup>289</sup> “The project of modernity formulated in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by the philosophers of the Enlightenment consisted in their efforts to develop objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art, according to their inner logic. [...] Enlightenment thinkers of the cast of mind of Condorcet still had the extravagant expectation that the arts and the sciences would promote not only the control of natural forces, but would also further understanding of the world and of the self, would promote moral progress, the justice of institutions, and even the happiness of human beings. The 20<sup>th</sup> century has chattered this optimism [...]. But the problem won’t go away: should we try to hold on to the *intentions* of the Enlightenment, feeble as they may be, or should we declare the entire project of modernity a lost cause?” (original emphasis, Habermas 1981b: 9).

<sup>290</sup> What I refer to here as ‘modern’ thought, others refer to as ‘liberal’. Indeed, several of the arguments introduced in this chapter as critical of modernity overlap with what Stephen Holmes would refer to as “anti-liberal thought” (1989: 227). However, even if Kant is often referred to as liberal, and Habermas and the author of *Political Liberalism* “agree on many philosophical points” (Rawls 1996: 373), many contemporary defenders of Kantian and Habermasian approaches, in more or less modified versions, would not care for the label ‘liberal’, as they emphasize the difference between their approaches and approaches inspired for example by Rawls, and present their arguments under headings like “Liberal Dialogue Versus a Critical Theory of Discursive Legitimation” (Benhabib 1989) and “Kant’s justice and Kantian justice” (O’Neill 2000: 65-80, “Kantian justice” refers to Rawls’ theory of justice). Moreover, it should be clear from what I have said, that what I refer to here as ‘modern’ thought is are not all kinds of thinking that are not ‘postmodern’ For example, in Chapter 4 I referred to Sandra Harding as a critic of postmodern feminism. This does not make her a defender of modernity, according to the definition introduced here.

<sup>291</sup> Cf. Slagstad (1994), Widerberg (1994), L’orange Fürst (1995), Wærness (1995), Ve (1999a), Annfeldt (1999), Lundgren (2001).

<sup>292</sup> Cf. Young (1990, 1997), Benhabib (1992), Scott and Butler (1992), Dean (1996), Pauer-Studer (1998), Kymlicka (2002), Held (2004).

<sup>293</sup> Onora O’Neill distinguishes between “defenders of abstract rights and justice”, and “advocates of communitarian or feminist accounts of traditions of virtue” (1989: xi). She positions feminism as a branch of communitarianism, in opposition to the project of modernity. But O’Neill does herself defend this project, and has elaborated its relevance for feminism (O’Neill 2000). In fact, several influential feminist theorists connect their theorizing intimately to Kant (in addition to O’Neill, for example Nagl-Docekal 1999), Rawls (for example Okin 1989, Cornell 1995, 1998, Nussbaum 1999, 2000) or Habermas (for example Benhabib 1992, Chambers 1995, Cohen 2002).

<sup>294</sup> Many seem to think they have to excuse themselves for doing so. Consider the title of Marcia Bacon’s book, *Kantian Ethics Almost Without Apology* (1995). Consider also Johanna Meehan’s introduction to *Feminists Read Habermas. Gendering the Subject of Discourse*: “Perhaps the first question this introduction should answer is why feminists *should* read Habermas at all. Habermasian theory stands squarely in a tradition of Enlightenment-inspired political theory and deontological ethics which many feminists have thoroughly rejected, and the authors anthologized here are to some extent rowing against the feminist main-stream” (original emphasis, 1995: 1).

<sup>295</sup> Later in her introduction, Iversen mentions Seyla Benhabib as an example of a feminist spokes-woman of the project of modernity. Benhabib (1986, 1992) defends a modified version of Jürgen Habermas’ discourse ethics.

## 5.1 The significance of the Norwegian case

Feminist critique is elaborated, discussed and assessed within the interdisciplinary field that is often referred to as ‘feminist theory’. The field has separate journals,<sup>296</sup> conferences and leading figures.<sup>297</sup> Most feminist theorists participate in other fields as well: They are *also* literary, psychoanalytical or aesthetical theorists, moral philosophers, epistemologists, philosophers of science, social, political, cultural or legal theorists, and publish works on feminism within these fields in addition to their contributions to feminist theory.<sup>298</sup> There are very few Norwegian feminist theorists, if we by the term mean those who publish in the journals of the field of feminist theory, or on feminist theory in international journals within other fields or in books published by international publishers.<sup>299</sup>

In spite of this, I have chosen to take as my point of departure feminist critique as introduced in recent Norwegian debates. By the beginning of the 1990s the Norwegian field of feminist research had entered what one commentator refers to as “a period of self-reflection” (Widerberg 1992: 286).<sup>300</sup> In this period of self-reflection many Norwegian feminists have in fact engaged themselves with feminist theory. Even if this engagement has rarely resulted in international publications, the outcome is considerable. Numerous articles, dissertations and books published during the past decade and a half, address the question of what feminism is,

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<sup>296</sup> Such as *Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society* and *Feminist Theory: An International Interdisciplinary Journal*.

<sup>297</sup> I.e. figures that are considered leading representatives of – and even inventors of – different approaches within the field. In a special issue of the Norwegian journal for feminist research (2/93), *Nytt om kvinneforskning*, they are referred to as “stars” (the title of the issue is “Kvinneforskningens stjerner” (“The Stars of Women’s Research”). For an instructive and extensive overview of different approaches and its leading figures, see *A Companion to Feminist Philosophy* (2000), edited by Alison M. Jaggar and Iris Marion Young. The volume contains not only essays on problems conventionally dealt with within the discipline of philosophy. It is rather, and is also introduced as, a companion to “feminist theory” in the broad sense suggested here (2000: i).

<sup>298</sup> Some of the leading figures within the field of feminist theory are also influential figures in one or more of these fields, such as Martha Nussbaum (moral philosophy, political theory) and Judith Butler (literary and cultural theory).

<sup>299</sup> If the criterion is regular and not merely occasional publishing of this sort, Norway has perhaps only one scholar who qualifies as a feminist theorist, Toril Moi, currently professor at Duke University. Among her publications are *Sexual/Textual Politics: Feminist Literary Theory* (1985), *French Feminist Thought* (1987), *Feminist Theory and Simone de Beauvoir* (1990), *The Making of an Intellectual Woman* (1994) and *What is a Woman? And Other Essays* (1999). There are, however, other Norwegian feminist scholars with an original, mainly theoretical profile, such as the social anthropologists Jorun Solheim and Elisabeth L’orange Fürst and the literary theorist Ellen Mortensen.

<sup>300</sup> “[...] the time [has] come for a period of self-reflection”, Karin Widerberg stated in a programmatic article in 1992. I give a brief history of feminist research in Norway in 5.2.

and discuss, in particular, the relationship between feminist critique and the modern imaginary.

In this rich self-reflecting literature I have identified a variety of arguments against modernity and its modes of thinking. Many of the arguments will be recognizable to those familiar with contemporary feminist theory. Sometimes the reference to standards positions and approaches in international debates is explicit and even crucial for how the argument is framed. However, I will investigate and discuss whether Norwegian debates do not also have a particular argumentative profile that distinguishes it from how feminist debates are typically mapped in standard works of feminist theory.<sup>301</sup> Several critics have interpreted the turn to feminist theory in the period of self-reflection in Norway as an expression of homogenization and increased Anglo-American and French influence, since American and French scholars are considered to dominate international feminist theory.<sup>302</sup> The reflexive discourse may, however, also have distinctive national traits.<sup>303</sup> This is a question for investigation.<sup>304</sup> Are Anglo-American debates simply copied?

In Chapter 6 I will discuss whether the profile of contemporary Norwegian academic feminism stands in a particular relationship to the profile of political feminism in Norway and its institutionalization in a 'state feminist system' (Hernes 1987). Is it reasonable to connect the self-reflective discourse in Norwegian academic feminism to the particular characteristics of the state feminist "regime"?<sup>305</sup> Thus, assuming there are connections, what is elaborated in

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<sup>301</sup> This question is addressed in 5.6.

<sup>302</sup> See for example Widerberg (1994, 1998), Wærness (1995), Halsaa (1996b), Bjørhovde (1997), Ve (1999a). The American and French dominance is a fact. An overwhelming majority of the 'stars' in feminist theory are professors at universities in the United States. It should be added, however, that some of them do not fit neatly into the category of 'Anglo-American feminist', such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (India/Colombia University) and Saskia Sassen (Argentina/University of Chicago). There are also leading feminist theorists based outside France and the U.S., for example Rosi Braidotti (Utrecht University) and Herta Nagl-Docekal (University of Vienna). Many have positions at universities in Canada, Australia and Great Britain. In short, the field of feminist theory seems to be haunted by patterns of concentration and marginalization similar to other academic fields, linked to the cultural and economic power relations of the contemporary global order.

<sup>303</sup> There might be interesting institutional or regional variations as well. Siri Gerrard and Halldis Valestrand (1999a) analyze the distinctive features of feminist studies at the University of Tromsø. In the anthology *Is there a Nordic Feminism?* edited by Drude von der Fehr, Bente Rosenbeck and Anna G. Jónasdóttir, the contributors search for regional Nordic characteristics. Institutional and regional variations are, however, not dealt with in my discussions here.

<sup>304</sup> The peculiar national characteristics of earlier periods of Norwegian feminist research are generally recognized, perhaps even somewhat overstated. The second-wave feminism of the 1970s were based on "imported" concepts, theories and perspectives, in particular from the United States, as well as on concepts, theories and perspectives developed in the Norwegian research field (Hagemann 2004).

<sup>305</sup> Rune Slagstad defines a "knowledge regime" as "a unity of power, knowledge and value" (1998: 17, 2004). My focus will be on the normative basis of the 'state feminism' developed as part of the knowledge regime of

this chapter is the academic-feminist self-reflection of a state feminist regime. As such, it should be of interest outside Norway. Since the 1960s the United Nations has recommended that its member states establish “government structures that are formally charged with furthering women’s status and rights”, “national policy machineries for the advancement of women” (McBride Stetson and Mazur 1995: 1-2, 3). In this connection the Scandinavian state feminist system is often singled out as a model system. Leading academic feminists refer to the Scandinavian countries in similar terms. Norway is “my northern star”, Arlie Hochschild declares.<sup>306</sup> Nancy Fraser points to the Scandinavian “social democratic welfare state” as more sensitive to feminist concerns than other existing political arrangements.<sup>307</sup> In “The Patriarchal Welfare State” Carol Pateman singles out the Scandinavian welfare states as “the more developed welfare states” where “women have moved nearer to [...] full citizenship” than elsewhere, even if they “have not yet” completely achieved it (1998: 242). Hence, bluntly speaking, Scandinavia’s state feminism is often considered, if not a feminist utopia, then at least a stop on the road to it: “The social democratic citizenship ideal” of the Scandinavian countries has a unique “women-friendly potential”, like Helga Hernes has argued (1987: 110).<sup>308</sup> What kind of feminist critique might be expected to arise in this environment?

## **5.2 The period of self-reflection – a historical perspective<sup>309</sup>**

Harriet Holter singles out five different periods in the development of Norwegian feminist research. First, she refers to a “predecessor period” from the beginning of the eighteenth-century to the 1930s (1996: 42). In this period writings on “the woman issue” were published by leading figures of “the bourgeois-liberal women’s movements”,<sup>310</sup> and late in the period, also by feminists in the worker’s movement (op.cit.: 43). However, the issue had not yet been

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the Labor Party state. Consider also Peter Wagner’s (1990) comparative analysis of the connections between the state and the development of the social sciences in France, Italy and Germany.

<sup>306</sup> Quoted in Brandth and Kvande (2003: 17). They refer to a lecture given by Hochschild in Trondheim in 2001. entitled “At the End of Global Care Chains: Children and the Global Transfer of Love”.

<sup>307</sup> In Fraser and Honneth (2003).

<sup>308</sup> I will return to Hernes’ influential assessment in Chapter 6.

<sup>309</sup> This is a brief outline of the research field’s central research problems and approaches in different periods, mainly based on Harriet Holter’s brief overview. Similarly brief overviews are written (see for example Halsaa 2003). For an institutionally oriented analysis of the development of the research field, see Halsaa (1996). A more extensive intellectual and sociological history of the research field remains to be written.

<sup>310</sup> Holter analyzes works by among others Camilla Collett, Aasta Hansteen, Margarete Bonnevie and Mimi Sverdrup Lunden.

linked to systematic scientific inquiries. This happened in the second “period of gender roles” which lasted from the 1930s to the end of the 1960s (op.cit.: 48). This period was characterized by “the attempt to make gender and gender differences scientific” using “positivist-empirical” approaches and methods (ibid.). The main focus was on sociological and social-psychological studies of gender roles. The notion of gender role was inspired by Talcott Parsons, at the same time as Parson’s structural functionalism, in particular his subscription to the idea of “complementarity” between women and men as “functional in and for society” was attacked (op.cit.: 50). Significant contributors were Erik Grønseth, Per Olav Tiller, Sverre Brun-Gulbrandsen, Berit Ås, in addition to Harriet Holter herself, often considered the founding mother of Norwegian feminist research.<sup>311</sup>

Third, we can talk of a “period of patriarchy and agency” from about 1970 until the mid-1980s (op.cit.: 52). The focus in this period was on how “material, economic and political structures”, in particular patriarchy and capitalism and their interrelations, created women’s oppression (op.cit.: 52, 54). The Nordic feminist researchers were “well-informed”, Holter says, and positioned themselves relative to international theory debates and the leading figures in these debates, such as Juliet Mitchell, Gayle Rubin, Heidi Hartmann and Ulrike Prokop (op.cit.: 54). However, the Norwegian researchers did not contribute “originally” in “international fora” (ibid.). Moreover, there were in fact very few empirical studies of patriarchy and capitalism as systems (op.cit.: 55).<sup>312</sup>

The focus of the period of patriarchy and agency was also on studies of women as “agents”, a perspective often contrasted to the gender-role perspective – “women are agents, not norm- or role puppets”, it was argued (op.cit.: 52). From this perspective, numerous empirical studies of women’s lives and experiences were made focusing on work, family and everyday-life. Thus, the problem-oriented, empirical focus of the period of gender roles persisted, even if the conceptual framework had changed. The ambitions behind the agency-studies were critical: to reveal the patriarchal and capitalist oppression of women’s lifeworld. The scholars’ ideological commitments were radical-feminist and/or Marxist-feminist. Norwegian “liberal” feminists at the time were not engaged in feminist research, Holter notes (op.cit.: 54). This critical commitment was combined with a concern for women’s “dignity”: The focus were to

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<sup>311</sup> A special issue of the Norwegian journal for feminist research (*Nytt om kvinneforskning*) was published in 1992 containing articles on her contributions.

<sup>312</sup> There were a few exceptions, such as some of Holter’s own contributions, and works by Hildur Ve (for example Ve 1977). Consider also Holter, Ve Henriksen, Gjertsen and Hjort (1975).

be on “women’s oppression” and “the counter-strategies against relations of dominance between men and women” (op.cit.: 58). The latter required sensitivity towards the “meaning” women attached to their situation and women’s distinct “rationality” (op.cit.: 53, 57). The agency-studies were influenced in this sense by the critique directed against positivism during the 1970s, Holter argues.<sup>313</sup>

The fourth period of Norwegian feminist research Holter refers to as the “period of culture, context and relations” (op.cit.: 60). It lasts throughout the 1980s and is transformed gradually into a fifth period by the beginning of the 1990s, a period Holter simply refers to as the “period of the present and the future” (op.cit.: 41). The empirical focus in the fourth period remains on the level of the agent, more specifically on how gender is “made” and “negotiated” in meaningful interaction: Gender is a “relation” and a “cultural code” reproduced and transformed in local concrete arenas (op.cit.: 63).<sup>314</sup> Negotiations are shaped and limited by “structural, cultural and personal conditions” (ibid.). Grand theories of patriarchal and capitalist oppression are, however, rejected. Such tendencies are considered unhistorical and static; unable to “describe and explain change” (op.cit.: 61). Other tendencies characteristic of the period of culture, context and relations are, according to Holter, a growing interest in “poststructuralist” and “postmodernist” theory, phenomenology, qualitative methodology, psychoanalysis, popular culture, sexuality and the body (ibid.). These tendencies are strengthened in the fifth period of the present and the future, characterized, however, above all by a “reflexive” turn; intensified self-critical reflection on the theories, concepts, approaches and basic presuppositions of feminist research (ibid.). Thus, Holter’s description of the period of the present and the future resembles Widerberg’s observation of *a period of self-reflection* in contemporary Norwegian feminist research. As noted by both, this self-reflection is accompanied by an increased interest in epistemology, critique of science and different branches of feminist theory. Their observations were made in the early and mid-1990s – and have a predictive character: Holter and Widerberg believe the reflexive turn will continue to influence Norwegian academic-feminist debates in the years to come.

A few qualifying remarks are needed, however. First, a self-reflective wave in this research field can indeed be identified the last ten to fifteen years. However, most of what has been

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<sup>313</sup> For an elaboration and discussion of the debate on positivism in Norway, see Slagstad (1980).

<sup>314</sup> Holter mentions the social psychologist Hanne Haavind as a central exponent of the relational turn.

published in this period, either does not address meta-issues, or addresses them only briefly. Also, among those who have contributed, most have published on other issues as well, and most have published most often other issues than meta-issues. Thus, self-reflection and meta-debates have not replaced empirical investigation. It is indicative that the research programs on gender initiated by the Research Council of Norway during this period have financed mostly empirically-oriented projects.<sup>315</sup> Meta-projects are exceptions,<sup>316</sup> a fact pointed out by critics (Mortensen 2002).<sup>317</sup> Typically, questions connected to feminist self-reflection are raised and discussed in single articles,<sup>318</sup> or in chapters of dissertations and books by authors who mostly write about other issues. Hence, it is not the case that Norwegian feminist research has turned into “a race for theory” and is dominated by “metatheoretical discourse” (Wærness 1995: 21), even if the self-reflective discourse of the research field is more intense and varied than in previous periods.

Second, there were discussions also during the 1970s and 1980s about the basis of feminist critique. If we return to *Kvinnekunnskap* (1976),<sup>319</sup> *I kvinners bilde* (1977)<sup>320</sup> and *Patriarchy in a Welfare Society* (1984), three anthologies with contributions from central figures in the research field at the time, we find for example an article discussing from “a phenomenological and existential starting point” feminist “self-organization” and “dialogical action” for “emancipation”, referring to Jürgen Habermas, Max Horkheimer, Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge, to Rune Slagstad and Thomas Mathiesen, to Simone de Beauvoir, Sheila Rowbotham and Luce Irigaray (Gulli 1977). Another contributor provides a feminist critique of sociological concepts, referring among others to Dorothy Smith, Ann Oakley, Jessie Bernhard, Kate Millett and Shulamit Firestone, to Rune Slagstad and Regi Enerstvedt (Berge 1977).<sup>321</sup> There are reflections on the relationship between patriarchy and capitalism in

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<sup>315</sup> There have been four programs: *Program for grunnleggende samfunnsvitenskapelig kvinneforskning*, *Program for grunnleggende humanistisk kvinneforskning* (both 1988-1994), *Kjønn i endring: institusjoner, normer, identiteter* (1996-2002), and the one running at the present, *Kjønnforskning: kunnskap, grenser, endring*.

<sup>316</sup> *Kjønn i endring: institusjoner, normer, identiteter* did, for example, fund 31 projects. Only 3 have a clear meta-theoretical dimension: “The Mind-Brain Continuum: Towards a Naturalistic Feminist Theory of Embodiment and Culture” (Tone Bleie), “Sexual Differences: Beyond Constructionism” (Kjell Soleim) and “Feminisme og liberalisme” (Kjersti Fjørtoft).

<sup>317</sup> Mortensen complains about the priorities of the board of the new research program.

<sup>318</sup> Or even in parts of single articles that mainly deal with other things.

<sup>319</sup> *Women's Knowledge*.

<sup>320</sup> *In the Image of Women*.

<sup>321</sup> The articles in *Kvinnekunnskap* and *I kvinners bilde* are generally influenced by international feminist, Marxist and critical theory, Norwegian sociologists and philosophers outside the feminist research field, in particular the critics of positivism, and established scholars in the feminist research field, such as Harriet Holter



explanations of women's oppression (Berg 1977, Kalleberg 1977, Haukaa 1984), between "impersonal forms" of male dominance and "how men dominate" in the concrete interactions of personal relationships, for example in the "exchanges between spouses" (Haavind 1984), and between women as oppressed and women as "altruistic" agents with "dignity" within the framework of a distinct and possibly progressive "women's culture" (Haukaa 1977,<sup>322</sup> Sørensen 1977,<sup>323</sup> Ve 1984<sup>324</sup>).

These publications all contribute to a discussion of standards in feminist politics and inquiry. The discussions of patriarchy/capitalism and personal/impersonal oppression are, for example, discussions of the overall explanatory framework of feminist analysis. The discussion on altruism, dignity and women's culture raises the question of the nature of the agent of feminist critique (altruistic, dignified), and the question of the moral or ethical standards of feminist critique (altruism, women's culture). These cases give nuance to the prevailing view that there was mostly "empirically-driven theory development" in Norwegian feminist research during the 1970s and 1980s, as opposed to present-day "metatheoretical theory" (Halsaa 2003: 6).

Third, Harriet Holter's description of the development of the research field puts greater emphasis on developments in the social sciences than in the humanities. There are, moreover, interesting, more detailed stories to be told about particular branches of the research field, for example about the development of individual disciplines.<sup>325</sup> Holter's historical analysis captures however certain general trends.

### 5.3 Methodological considerations

The period of self-reflection in Norwegian academic feminism may be read, as suggested by Iversen, as a period of reflection on the relationship between feminism and modernity. The

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and Erik Grønseth. This blend of international and Norwegian, feminist and other influences characterize contemporary contributions as well (see. 5.6).

<sup>322</sup> Haukaa discusses Berit Ås' notion of women's culture, see Ås (1974).

<sup>323</sup> The title of her article is "Arbeiderkvinner og verdighet" ("Working Class Women and Dignity").

<sup>324</sup> The title of her article is "Kvinneres gjensidige allianser. Altruisme som premiss for samhandling" ("Women's Mutual Alliances. Altruism as a Premise for Interaction").

<sup>325</sup> The contributors in Taksdal and Widerberg (1992) give overviews of the development of feminist research in social anthropology, political science, psychology, pedagogy, sociology and economics. Wesenberg (1995) analyzes the development of women's law, Melby (1995) developments within the discipline of history, Malterud (1997) research on women and gender in Norwegian medicine. Iversen (2002) reflects on feminism in Norwegian literary theory and comparative literature. These are but some examples. To reflect in more or less detail on the history of the research field is central to what the self-reflective discourse of the research field is all about.

discourse on modernity introduces a set of arguments against a modern notion of feminism. What the arguments have in common, is that they all in one way or another question modernity's standards of critique. Thus, what I have wished to investigate, is a feminist meta-debate – feminist critique against modernity's standards of critique and the discussion of this critique – not all kinds of discussions going on within the feminist research field. Thus, I have tried to limit my analysis to publications that contribute to meta-debate. In a sense, all that have been published in the research field can be interpreted as contribution to such debate. All publications rely on certain implicit standards of critique that can be explicated and deliberated upon; they all address, in this sense, meta-questions. However, the focus here will be on what is already explicated, the meta-*discourse* in Habermas' sense, and on publications that contribute significantly to such discourse: What interests me is not only the meta-claims, but also in the argumentative defense of these claims. What kind of feminist meta-critique is raised against the parameters of modernity, more precisely? And why have such processes of meta-explication within the research field at all occurred? The latter question will be addressed in 5.7, as well as in Chapter 6.

Most commentators agree that the period of self-reflection starts around 1990. I have searched systematically for relevant publications from 1990 onwards. It was, however, not a particular episode that triggered the reflexive wave. Rather, it seems to have been several processes interacting in a particular way, that made 'something' happen towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>326</sup> Thus, by beginning my search in 1990, it is possible I have missed publications from the end of the 1980s that are early expressions of the turn to meta-theory.<sup>327</sup> The danger that I will miss crucial points is less likely, however.<sup>328</sup>

I stop my survey in 2002. I had to do so because of my work schedule; I do not stop in 2002 because I have any reason to say self-reflection has come to an end. Rather, the self-reflective discourse seems to persist into 2003 and 2004. I have allowed myself to include relevant

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<sup>326</sup> I will elaborate and discuss these processes in 5.7.

<sup>327</sup> *Nytt om kvinneforskning* for example, began a series in the late 1980s with articles on 'feminist key texts'. The first articles in this series fall outside my reading here, while, for example, Gullvåg Holter (1991) on Marx and Borchgrevink (1992) on Shulamit Firestone are included.

<sup>328</sup> Consider for example Hanne Haavind's (1989) article "Rasjonalitet, makt og følelser" ("Rationality, power, and emotions") where she argues that the male rationality that governs scientific practice should be replaced with a female rationality that is more faithful to our sentiments. This is an input to a meta-debate: It concerns the truth-idealization generally, and, more specifically, the critical standards of science. The point has, however, been repeated, developed and critically discussed on several occasions later. Lately, Hagemann has given an extensive account of Haavind's article and the debate it triggered (2003: 189-216).

publications also from 2003 and 2004 in my discussion, as far as I have become aware of them and have had the time to include them. Re-printed publications, originally published before 1990, are excluded from my selection.<sup>329</sup>

In my search for publications I have taken as my point of departure:<sup>330</sup>

- Articles published in the journal *Kvinneforskning*,<sup>331</sup> the only Norwegian journal devoted to feminist research.
- Articles published by Norwegian researchers in *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidsskrift* (Swedish), in *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* (Danish), and in *NORA. Norwegian Journal of Women's Studies*.<sup>332</sup>
- Lists of publications of established scholars in the field working on gender issues.<sup>333</sup>

Reading relevant publications stemming from these three sources, and their lists of references, I became aware of other relevant publications.<sup>334</sup> The publications included in my final selection are both journal articles, contributions in anthologies and conference reports, monographs or monograph-chapters, dissertations or dissertation-chapters, research reports, book-reviews,<sup>335</sup> and even interviews. I do not claim that all relevant publications are included. From the way I have been going about, it seems possible that I may have overlooked contributions of interest published in discipline-specific journals and relevant works by less established scholars in the field.

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<sup>329</sup> This implies for example that some of the articles on women's law in Tove Stang Dahl's *Pene piker haiker ikke* (1994a) are included, while others, originally published before 1990, are excluded.

<sup>330</sup> The selected publications are listed in Appendix.

<sup>331</sup> Issued four times a year. The name of the journal was changed in 1994 from *Nytt om kvinneforskning* to *Kvinneforskning*. *Kvinneforskning* was not a peer reviewed journal until 1/2000. This may be linked to the relatively late academization of Norwegian feminist research: For a long time, delivering adequate knowledge to the women's movement and the femocrats was more important than living up to formal academic standards (Halsaa 2003, Hernes 2004, but questioned by Blom 2003). The intensified reflexive discourse in the period of self-reflection might be read as a catching-up in light of this late academization (see 5.7).

<sup>332</sup> I have also searched through some international journals, *Signs*, *Feminist Theory*, *Feminist Review*, *Gender Studies* and *The European Journal of Women's Studies*. This confirmed my *prima facie* impression that Norwegian academic feminists rarely publish on feminist theory outside Scandinavia. Of the five journals mentioned here, I found most Norwegian contributions in *The European Journal of Women's Studies*. I have not systematically searched after publications on feminist theory by Norwegian researchers in other more topic- or discipline-specific international journals. Some of the contributors have, moreover, published significantly in international journals, even if they have not published internationally on feminist theory.

<sup>333</sup> I had acquired knowledge of the central figures from previous investigation of the field (for example Holst 2001, 2002). Their lists of publications are often publicly available on the web (university web-sites, home-pages etc.).

<sup>334</sup> I have also looked thoroughly through several discipline-specific journals. It would be fair to say that my search for publications in the social sciences has been somewhat more thorough than my search for publications in the humanities, law and psychology, not to mention the natural sciences and medicine.

<sup>335</sup> Mostly, book-reviews are excluded. I have, however, included some that I found particularly well suited to illustrate a certain point.

Furthermore, I have read the publications more or less thoroughly before including them or excluding them from my selection of texts. The articles published in *Nytt om kvinneforskning/Kvinneforskning* have been closely read. This reading is the backbone of my analysis. Due to the time-limit on this project, I have been forced on other occasions to make decisions of inclusion or exclusion following a brief reading-through, and based on what titles, subtitles, introductions, abstracts, or previous knowledge about the author, suggest about the content of the publication.<sup>336</sup> Had my schedule allowed it, I would of course have preferred to have considered all candidates thoroughly.

The publications in my selection are mostly written by feminist researchers with positions<sup>337</sup> at Norwegian universities, colleges, and research institutes. A few of the authors are, however, freelance-writers,<sup>338</sup> have positions in non-governmental organizations,<sup>339</sup> or in state bureaucracy (“femocrats”).<sup>340</sup> A few hold, at the time of writing, positions at universities abroad.<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>336</sup> The content of different publications by the same author sometimes overlaps. In cases of great overlap between two or more publications, I have allowed myself to include only one of them.

<sup>337</sup> Doctoral scholars included. I have included contributions from graduates, when they have published their graduate thesis as a research report (for example Rustad 1996 and Rekdal 2002), or turned parts of it into a journal-article or a book-chapter (for example Solhøy 1999 and Engebretsen 1999). I have not had the time to go through all relevant graduate theses, even though I suspect many of them touch upon interesting reflexive issues. This suspicion is linked to the hypothesis that there may be a connection between the period of self-reflection and generational patterns (see 5.7, and my analysis of some graduate theses in feminist sociology in Holst 2001: 173-184).

<sup>338</sup> See for example Ovesen (2000/2001) and Spjeldnæs (2000/2001).

<sup>339</sup> See for example Strøm (1995), Bostad (1995) and Salimi (1997).

<sup>340</sup> See for example Gulbrandsen (1998) and Aas (1998). That contributors in academic publications have positions outside the academic field, reflect the late academization of the research field, and that there are still close connections between parts of the research field, femocrats and activists (see Halsaa 1996, 2003, and 5.7).

<sup>341</sup> For example Toril Moi (Duke University, US) and Eva Lundgren (University of Uppsala, Sweden). However, I concentrate on their publications in Norwegian journals or by Norwegian publishers, and thus omit several of their publications. Generally speaking, I have excluded from my selection of texts translated contributions written by feminist researchers with positions at universities outside Norway, and with no formal institutional connections to the Norwegian research field. This is why I have included articles by, for example, Kirsten Ketcher, professor at the University of Copenhagen, and Sara Heinämaa, professor at the University of Helsinki, from the period they were professor II at the University of Oslo (published in Norwegian journals or in books with Norwegian publishers), but excluded, for example, professor at the University of Minnesota Naomi Scheman’s contribution in Lotherington and Markussen (1999), and the contributions by Linda Alcoff (US), Alison M. Jaggar (US), Rosi Braidotti (the Netherlands), Ulla Holm (Sweden), Eva Lundgren-Gothlin (Sweden), Katri Kaalikoski (Finland) and Ullaliina Lehtinen (Finland) in Preus, Vetlesen, Kleven, Iversen and von der Fehr (1996). *Kvinneforskning* has published several articles of this sort. It could be argued that these publications also should be included; that the authors are participating in the discussions of ‘Norwegian academic feminism’ qua authors of articles often translated into and published in Norwegian, by Norwegian publishers, for a Norwegian-speaking audience. Why put so much weight on the national origin of the author and formal institutional connections? Would it not in fact be more reasonable to exclude for example publications in English or Swedish by authors born in or with formal institutional connections to Norway, published in non-Norwegian journals and by non-Norwegian publishers? My emphasis on national origin and formalized institutional bonds is linked to

Finally, a note on the term ‘feminist research’.<sup>342</sup> Many of those whom I refer to here as feminist researchers, refer themselves to what they are doing as women’s research or gender research, or even men’s research.<sup>343</sup> There are three reasons why I have nevertheless opted for the term feminist research. One is that the self-reflective discourse in the research field is very much a discourse on feminism: Contributors, whether they think of themselves as women’s researchers, men’s researchers or gender researchers when they undertake empirical investigations, conceptualize their meta-reflections very often as reflections on the implications of a feminist commitment. Another reason is that the established international label applied to the kind of discussions I am analyzing here is ‘feminist’.<sup>344</sup> A third reason is that the term gender research<sup>345</sup> might be taken to refer also to research carried out outside the field of research whose meta-debates I am analyzing here. In Norwegian *kjønn*<sup>346</sup> denote both ‘sex’ and ‘gender’, *kjønnforskning* both research on ‘sex’ and ‘gender’.<sup>347</sup> Research on *kjønn* (qua ‘sex’) is also being carried out, for example, in the fields of medicine, biology and experimental psychology. Contributors to these fields do not participate in the self-reflective discourse on feminism I am studying here, however, or at least only minimally. That is: They are only included if they have published reflexive pieces on feminism in the different sources I have searched, and not many have.<sup>348</sup>

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my ambition to comment on the relationship between the reflexive turn and the political-cultural context (state feminism). To do so I need to focus on agents of reflexivity (so to speak) that have stable connections to this context. In this sense, the justification of my operational definition of ‘Norwegian academic feminism’ is analytical. I do not mean to position myself in a normative debate about which publications should be referred to as Norwegian and which should not.

<sup>342</sup> That is used interchangeably with terms such as ‘feminist inquiry’, ‘academic feminism’ and ‘feminist publications’.

<sup>343</sup> For overviews of men’s research in Norway, see for example Øvrelid (1996), Oftung (1997) and Slottemo (2000).

<sup>344</sup> Consider also my discussion of Susan Haack’s criticism of *feminist* epistemology in Chapters 1-4.

<sup>345</sup> The terms women’s research and men’s research are simply too exclusive. Each of them excludes, for example, the other.

<sup>346</sup> This is, however, also the case with other languages. Consider for example the German term *Geschlecht*.

<sup>347</sup> Hence, the Norwegian language is in a sense up to date with recent developments in international feminist theory on this point. Whereas to distinguish between the biological (sex) and the social (gender) dimension of the relationship between women and men was commonplace for a long time, many theorists now argue for the need to deconstruct this distinction, and reconceptualize what it means to be a ‘woman’ (for defenses of this view in Norwegian debates, see for example Solheim (1998, 1999), Moi (1999) and Lundgren (2001). Widerberg reflects interestingly on this point in her article “Translating gender” (1998).

<sup>348</sup> Looking at *Nytt om kvinneforskning/Kvinneforskning* it seems there were more contributors coming from outside the human and social sciences (broadly speaking), in the early years than of late. If we consider those who have contributed substantially to feminist meta-debates from outside the human- and social sciences (law and social psychology included), there are generally very few. There are exceptions, such as professor of medicine, Kirsti Malterud. She is, however, not surprisingly, working with medical problems from a sociological and cultural perspective, and in cooperation with human and social scientists. One of the few who has tried to relate ‘feminism’ to theories of sex or gender within the natural sciences, is Tone Bleie. She is, not surprisingly, a social anthropologist. It should also be noted that there are contributors within the human and social sciences

## 5.4 Criticism of the thinking of modernity

I organize my presentation and discussion around arguments. There are often different variants of the arguments listed here. Also, the arguments are more or less elaborated, and contextualized in different ways by different contributors. Two contributors might, for example, raise similar meta-arguments against modernity while addressing, however, quiet different problems. Or similar arguments might be embedded in different theoretical and conceptual frameworks. My presentation will do fully justice neither to the rich variations in many of the arguments, nor to the different contexts in which the arguments are introduced.

However, I shall try to give some body to the arguments. I shall begin the outline of each argument with a relatively thorough presentation of it and of its context, as it occurs in a contribution where the argument is elaborated and plays a significant role for the overall argument of the contribution. I go on to present, more briefly, some variations of the argument as it occurs in other contributions, I say something about how often it occurs, and about whether and in what sense it is considered controversial; present the controversy the argument inspires.

Having introduced the arguments and how they have been debated (5.4.1-5.4.15), I discuss, briefly, how the different arguments challenge the standards of critique as the modern imaginary introduce them (5.5), outline some general characteristics of the academic-feminist self-reflection in Norway (5.6), discuss why this wave of self-reflection occurred, and how its distinctiveness may be interpreted (5.7).

### 5.4.1 The conservatism of modern thought

In her monograph, *The Feminine and Nihilism: Luce Irigaray with Nietzsche and Heidegger* (1994), the literary theorist Ellen Mortensen positions the modern imaginary as incompatible with feminist transformative ambitions. Feminist projects shaped as “civil rights movements”

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who work on ‘women’ and ‘gender’, but who do not participate in the reflexive wave I am analyzing here. In the social sciences, for example, gender is one of several standard variables in quantitative research, and, obviously, many of these researchers do not participate in the feminist meta-debates on the agenda here. I do not have any reason, based on this study, to assume anything about how these researchers – and the sex or gender researchers in the natural sciences who are not included in my material – would relate their project to feminism.

seeking “to legitimize their plight within the parameters of the Enlightenment tradition” are too “*conservative*”, she says (my emphasis, 1994: 99, 101).<sup>349</sup> Mortensen defends instead “a new ethic of the feminine” (op.cit.: 11). The new ethic presupposes “a revolution in thought”; a reinterpretation of “the whole relationship between the subject and discourse, the subject and the world, the subject and the cosmic [...]”, because the feminine is repressed by the hegemonic, binary and hierarchical, or “phallogocentric discourses of philosophy, religion and science”; “the technological man-made languages” (op.cit.: 9), “molded upon a morphology of the masculine sexual libidinal economy”, creating “an exclusively masculine culture [...] which systematically excludes women” (op.cit.: 10).

She connects the idea of a repressed feminine to the psychoanalytic approach of Jacques Lacan. Lacan maintains that “the feminine does not have an imaginary of its own upon which the female subject might construct its mirror image” (op.cit.: 12); “within the signifying structures of the West, there exists no sexual difference of the subject. There is but one, the self-same, the masculine” (op.cit.: 10). Mortensen thinks the writings of the French feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray might facilitate “the revolutionary thinking” necessary for the feminine to be heard – because Irigaray sees “a different feminine Other, *le féminin*” that escapes “the phallogocentric discourses” captured by Lacan; “a nothing that resists representation” (ibid.). The point of departure of *The Feminine and Nihilism* is a close reading of Irigaray’s *Amante marine de Friedrich Nietzsche*:

Implicit in her [Irigaray’s] inquiry into Nietzsche’s text is her search for the feminine, which she, like Derrida, understands within the question of *écriture*, as the possibility of an-other gaze, an-other speech, and an-other language than those which have hitherto governed Western metaphysical thinking. By strategically inserting herself in the openings of Nietzsche’s writings and by listening to the silent *mater-ial* ground upon which he erects his philosophy, Irigaray retrieves that which has been muted in his discourse. This silence then serves as a potentiality for her exploration of sexual difference, or, for what she refers to as *le féminin* (op.cit.: 13).

For Irigaray, Mortensen says, “the subject’s Being is ultimately grounded in the materiality of the body which provides the matrix for the construction of every subject” (op.cit.: 14). Irigaray’s thinking on Being, tends however, to rely on the “division between the material and the spiritual” of “the subject-object paradigm” of “propositional thinking” (ibid.). It would thus, Mortensen argues, profit from being more closely linked to “Heidegger’s thinking on the

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<sup>349</sup> The statement occurs in a passage on the comedy *Lysistrata*. Mortensen highlights the conservative elements of the comedy by tracing similarities between its ‘parameters’ and the parameters of Enlightenment feminism.

question of ontological difference between Being and beings” (ibid.).<sup>350</sup> *Le féminin* is not to be connected to material beings (distinguished from spiritual beings), but rather to material Being: *Le féminin* is expressing “the existential fore-structure of *Dasein* [...], in which is hidden a positive possibility of the most primordial kind of knowing” (op.cit.: 35). “Assertion always already implies a fore-having, [...] constituted prior to any assertive propositioning”; “theoretical statements” are “derivative” (op.cit.: 36). The new ethic of the feminine should be thought of as the outcome of an “existential-hermeneutical” interpretation of the feminine materiality of Being (ibid.), the only ethic possible, Mortensen argues, in light of “nihilism”, “the historical movement” identified by Nietzsche, “whereby all values” are “devalued” and “man” loses “the ground upon which his moral and reason-able universe” is erected (op.cit.: 14).

Underlying Mortensen’s presentation of her new ethic of the feminine are two convictions. One is that feminism is about facilitating change. Mortensen’s focus is on changing or switching language, from the technocratic to the poetic; to the “revolutionary thinking” of the feminine Being (op.cit.: 10). In a collection published a few years later, *Touching Thought. Ontology and Sexual Difference*, she stresses that the concern behind this focus is “the concern for freedom”, not as freedom is usually dealt with, “within the confines of an ideology of liberation and a discourse of civil rights”, but rather freedom as “ontological freedom” (2002: 1,2,3). The point is to set *le féminin* free; to “allow freedom to ‘speak’” (2002: 2), not emancipation as conceptualized within “the horizon of Western language” (2002: 3).<sup>351</sup> This highlights the other conviction underlying Mortensen’s presentation; that the thinking of modernity (‘the horizon of Western language’) inadequately facilitates the changes feminism is trying to facilitate (‘revolutionary thinking’ and ‘ontological freedom’).<sup>352</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Heidegger’s ontological questioning is connected to his readings of the Pre-Socratics. Vigdis Songe-Møller suggests a similar reading of Heidegger: “[...] by his interpretation of truth as *aletheia* and *fysis* (developed in Parmenides and Heraclitus) Heidegger suggests – at least to us today, although he was not aware of it himself – a feminine reading of the Pre-Socratic and consequently a feminine critique of Plato’s more masculine way of thinking” (original emphasis, 1996: 49).

<sup>351</sup> “Why settle for liberation, if freedom might be in reach? If we were to follow Heidegger’s path of thinking – precisely by passively approaching the danger of the open *and* by *not* shying away the call of Being – we might safeguard *poetic* appearance in its free becoming. Therein lies our true possibility of freedom” (original emphasis, Mortensen 2002: 118).

<sup>352</sup> In *Touching Thought* an important aim is to show that even feminists who have radically questioned the thinking of modernity, such as Rosi Braidotti, Judith Butler, Elizabeth Grosz and Donna Haraway, in addition to Luce Irigaray, have not questioned it radically enough, because they have avoided ontological questioning. Rather, Mortensen hears in their writings “echoes of either Habermas or Rorty” (2002: 115).



These two convictions are widely held convictions. Not infrequently the demands for change of a feminist sort are made the hallmark of feminism and feminist inquiry: Feminist inquirers argue “unanimously” for the “need for change” (Røthing 2000: 77-78).<sup>353</sup> Feminists “research for change”, confronting “ideals with realities” (Skjeie 1999: 94-95).<sup>354</sup> Often, the changes feminists wish to facilitate are talked about in terms of changes of different kinds; located on different levels. Sociologist Karin Widerberg argues for example for the importance of distinguishing three analytical levels when studying gender relations – the social/structural level, the cultural/symbolic/discursive level and the individual/psychological level/the level of gender identities – and believes there is need for change on all three (1992: 295).<sup>355</sup>

There are also discussions about how radical the required changes need to be. Harriet Holter argues for example for radical social change; of “the power structures and the oppressive social and economic systems” (1996: 39). Ellen Mortensen highlights the need for radical cultural change; feminist strategies must escape “the binary system of meaning in Western

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<sup>353</sup> Skjeie and Hernes note accordingly: “What distinguishes feminist research from women’s research is in particular the degree of political explication: how essential is the project of change relative to the project of knowledge” (1997: 306).

<sup>354</sup> This way of putting the point is especially prevalent in the social sciences, in particular within the discipline of sociology. The self-understanding of feminist sociology is still closely linked to the tradition of problem oriented empiricism in Norwegian social research, often connected to Yngvar Løchen’s prescription for sociology, to confront ‘ideals with realities’ (Leira 1992). Scholars influenced by poststructuralism and French feminism, are more suspicious of talk about ‘reality’. However, to many feminist social scientists, the concept of social ‘reality’ is crucial, even when they work within poststructuralist philosophical frameworks. L’orange Fürst defends typically the relevance of Julia Kristeva for the social sciences because Kristeva (in opposition to other French feminists) insists on the existence of “a reality outside the text” (1999: 192). Another example is Widerberg (1994) who emphasizes the importance of notions of social reality and women’s ‘experience’, even though her reflections are influenced by poststructuralist theory (Ann Game and Joan W. Scott). Widerberg and L’orange Fürst are in this sense both representatives of ‘the sociological postmodernization’: They try to ‘postmodernize’ sociology without giving up their commitment to materialism (Holst 2001).

<sup>355</sup> Widerberg adopts this three-fold scheme from Sandra Harding. The scheme, or some version of it, is however commonplace. Often particular distinctions within the scheme are highlighted for particular purposes, as when Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg are reflecting on how psychological gender differs from cultural gender (1994: 2-3), or when Marit Melhuus, Ingrid Rudie and Jorun Solheim (1992) discuss gender as social relation versus gender as cultural meaning to make visible the dominant facets of the understanding of gender within feminist social anthropology. For even finer differentiations of the analytical levels of gender, see for example Anne-Kathrine Broch-Due and Tone Ødegård (1991), and Annick Prieur and Bera Ulstein Moseng (2000: 141-145). For a different and more philosophical typology of gender analysis, see Lundgren’s distinctions between empirical, analytical and theoretical gender (2001: 34-36). In general, typologies of gender vary between disciplines. To work on the level of biological sexual difference is considered valuable for example within some branches of feminist psychology (Andenæs, Johannessen and Ødegård 1992), and among anthropologists working on cognitive and evolutionary theory (Bleie 2003). Within other disciplines, as well as within other branches of psychology and anthropology, the biological approach is considered irrelevant, or even inappropriate, because it is considered to rely on an ‘essentialist’ notion of what a woman is (Moi 1999). Variations also reflect different philosophical or theoretical point of departures: As we have seen, the ontological subtext of sexual difference turns out to be crucial in the analyses of Mortensen (1994, 2002), and also of Soleim (1994, 1996), because of their reliance on Heidegger (Mortensen) and Descartes (Soleim). Another example is the focus on the ‘spatial’ dimensions of gender in for example Gerrard and Valestrand (1999a) and Wiestad (2002) connected to an interest in Donna Haraway’s ‘situated knowledge’ perspective (Gerrard and Valestrand), Merleau-Ponty’s phenomenology of the body and Irigaray’s attempt to ‘locate’ the feminine (Wiestad).

thinking” based on “an exclusively masculine culture founded on a genealogy of the father and the son” (1994: 10). Sociologist Hildur Ve (1993, 1999a, 1999b) argues for radical psychological change in her defense of socialization and education towards care, empathy and responsibility, rather than towards ‘detachment’, ‘independence’, and a ‘technically limited rationality’; the male model of identity formation should be replaced by a more female model of identity formation. Others recommend changes of a more modest sort, or, alternatively, argue that it is possible to achieve more than is often assumed, through changes of a more modest sort. Political scientist Hege Skjeie (1997, 1998, 2000)<sup>356</sup> argues for example that women in Scandinavia have gained more political power than has been assumed by some critics.<sup>357</sup> “Social democratic” institutional reform empowers women, even if it does not challenge the power structures of patriarchy and capitalism along radical-feminist and Marxist-feminist lines.<sup>358</sup> Several oppose the radical deconstruction of categories<sup>359</sup> often associated with ‘postmodernism’ or ‘poststructuralism’.<sup>360</sup>

The changes called for are also contextualized more or less constructively. Some highlight the possibilities for change through problem-oriented research and institutional reform.<sup>361</sup> Others emphasize the obstacles. Deep-seated hierarchical cultural norms,<sup>362</sup> gendered psycho-analytical patterns linked to the process of subject constitution,<sup>363</sup> the tacit, non-transparent, bodily aspects of gender,<sup>364</sup> and the depth and extension of structural injustice in a capitalist patriarchal society,<sup>365</sup> are not easily transformed. Added to these factors, is the fact of a

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<sup>356</sup> And different co-authors – Helga Hernes and the Danish political scientist Birte Siim.

<sup>357</sup> There has been a debate on this issue between Skjeie and Harriet Holter (1996). It parallels on several points a previous debate between the more optimistic Helga Hernes and the more pessimistic Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman, the “Polyanna and Cassandra” of Scandinavian feminist debates on citizenship (Skjeie and Teigen 2003: 40).

<sup>358</sup> Skjeie and Teigen (2003) follow a similar track when they, in a discussion with Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002), argue that state policies may very well target cultural repression, not only social injustice. Ellingsæter and Solheim argue that such policies cannot target deep-seated cultural patterns.

<sup>359</sup> In particular, there have been debates on how far and in what sense the category of woman can be deconstructed, and whether we can do without notions such as ‘truth’, ‘experience’ and ‘reality’.

<sup>360</sup> Cf. von der Fehr (1992, 1996), Hagemann (1994), Kvande (1998), Christensen (2000).

<sup>361</sup> Cf. Wærness (1995), Bojer (2002). Wærness argues against the postmodern tendency to metatheorizing and deconstruction, and suggests social research for reform and middle-range theory as a more promising path for feminist inquiry. Bojer proposes changes in ‘the basic structure’, where the family is included, as suggested by John Rawls’ ‘fair’ principles of justice.

<sup>362</sup> Cf. Borchgrevink (1999), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002). Borchgrevink aims to draw attention to the limits of formal individual rights when it comes to affording members of disrespected groups cultural recognition. Ellingsæter and Solheim highlight how difficult it is to transform the gendered connotations linked to different kinds of work.

<sup>363</sup> See Soleim (1994). Soleim’s interpretation of the persistence of sexual difference relies on the psychoanalytical theory of Lacan.

<sup>364</sup> Cf. de Vibe (1994), Isaksen (1996), Solheim (1998), Skramstad (1999).

<sup>365</sup> See for example Gullvåg Holter (1997).

disorderly natural and social world and unstable meaning systems, undermining our chances of successful instrumental planning: It is far more difficult to approach the means-end relation in a rational way than enlightenment feminists have assumed in their instrumental change-talk, it is argued.<sup>366</sup>

The second conviction underlying Mortensen's elaboration – that the thinking of modernity inadequately facilitates the changes feminists are trying to facilitate – is also a widely held conviction. Many critics agree that the modern imaginary is too conservative, even if they might have very different views on how this imaginary ought to be transformed if anti-feminist conservatism is to be avoided. Philosopher Linda M. Rustad argues for example that the liberal “equality perspective”, connecting political action to the assumption that “we necessarily have to be similar”, is insufficient if we are to “change women's situation, change the academic understanding of knowledge” in a “feminist” direction (1999: 94, 96). Instead, she recommends a “politics of difference” based on the “poststructuralist” approaches of Donna Haraway and Joan W. Scott (op.cit.: 93, 94).

Another example is sociologist Eva Lundgren, who stresses the unacceptable conservatism of “humanist feminism” and its basis in the idea of “the universal human” (1992: 27):

Somewhat schematic, we might say that women's research according to the humanist model will imply at most revisions and adjustments to the view on how society works, how goods are distributed and what values are prioritized (op.cit.: 30).

In humanist feminism there is no talk of “deeper changes” (op.cit.: 29). Lundgren's alternative to humanist feminism is not its opposite, “gynocentric feminism”, based on the idea that “women's traditional role and experiences” represent “positive values” and even “the foundation and point of departure for women's emancipation” (op.cit.: 28, 29). Rather, her ambition is to elaborate notions of “the male” and “the female” in a way that avoids the “essentialism” of gynocentric feminism as well as the conservatism and the exaggerated “constructivism” of humanist feminism. The male and the female should instead be considered as contextual “daily life” categories, involving both the “biological” and the “social” (op.cit.: 78-96). A third example is political scientist Beatrice Halsaa who in an overview of different political ideologies and their relationship to feminism, groups liberalism and conservatism together – she is, she says, using “the notion liberal political theory to cover

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<sup>366</sup> Cf. Holtan Sørensen (1993), Gulbrandsen (1998a), Flemmen (1999), Egeland (2003, 2004a, 2004b).

both liberalism and conservatism” (1996b: 185). In another passage she exemplifies contemporary liberal feminism by quoting a passage from the political program of the feminist group within the Norwegian conservative party (op.cit.: 157). Both examples contribute to positioning the project of liberal modernity as a conservative project.<sup>367</sup>

Thus, both convictions, that feminists should struggle for ‘change’, and that they cannot do so adequately and remain faithful to the project of modernity, are convictions widely shared, and seldom questioned. Feminists are considered to have “a normatively founded ambition to change the oppressive gender system of society and improve women’s situation” (Bjerrum Nielsen 1995: 375). Feminism is considered to be “a political and social movement to change society [...] [whose] goal is expressed in different ways; as women’s liberation and equality; struggle against discrimination against women and against women’s oppression” (Halsaa 1996b: 144). However, as suggested above, there are discussions going on about how much change, of what kind, is needed for feminist purposes, and on whether such changes are easily facilitated; and there are contributors who distance themselves from certain kinds of changes, from too radical changes, or utopian change-talk. Additionally, there are authors who complain that discussions on the connection between feminism and the ambition to change are too few, too partial, too shallow, or generally more complex than often assumed. Accepting the prevalent view in feminist circles that change is something to be valued, social anthropologist Tordis Borchgrevink reminds her audience: “There are types of changes that are neither pleasant, intriguing nor entertaining. That any change is as good as any other is a truth in need of modification” (1995: 337). She goes on to reflect on troublesome ambivalences connected even to changes that at least for women seem to be good; changes resulting in “more power and money for women” (ibid.). Political scientists Hege Skjeie and Helga Hernes ask for more deliberation on normative issues when feminists make proposals for change:

A weakness of some of the policy-oriented women’s research, [...] has been that it to a lesser degree has initiated a fundamental discussion about the meaning of competing cultures of justice, and of institutional conflicts of norms, for the legitimacy and efficiency of equal status politics (1997: 375).

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<sup>367</sup> Halsaa’s primary concern is not to engage in “metatheoretical” debates, but to intervene from a “state feminist” point of view undertaking “empirically oriented and applied research” (2003: 6, 1999: 15). As far as she is engaged herself in such debates, she emphasizes the relevance of radical-feminist analyses of patriarchy and socialist perspectives, against “poststructuralist criticism” of “grand narratives” (2003: 23, 1996b).

Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg, authors of *Psychological Gender and Modernity*, have a similar concern when they note how “confusing [...] the story of gender is”; a “simple labeling” of phenomena and developments as “progressive” or “regressive” often “misses the mark” (1994: 1-2). The social scientists Hanne Davidsen, Susanna M. Solli and Elisabeth Waaler (1996) ask for subtler epistemological considerations, in a discussion of feminist ambitions to change science.<sup>368</sup> Still others criticize the change-talk of being too abstract. They call for more concrete proposals of how, for example, scientific practice might be changed.<sup>369</sup>

Finally, there are some contributors who seem to deny altogether that feminism is linked to the ambition to change. However, they do so only in connection with making subtler points and distinctions. Professor in history, Kari Melby, defines feminism as “negotiations of female identities and counter-identities” (1997: 31). This avoidance of explicit change-talk, or rather, this more careful way of articulating the connection between feminism and the ambition to change, reflects Melby’s reluctance to make the “Enlightenment” feminism of “equality” between women and men, which is a notion of change in a certain way and in a certain direction, essentially more relevant “in an emancipatory context”, than a feminism of “difference” which emphasizes the value of “women’s culture”. It also reflects a distinction she draws between the “scientific” approach to the study of female and male identities, and different “political” approaches to feminism, where more aggressive change-talk might be legitimate (Melby 1997: 31-61).<sup>370</sup>

Another example is Ellen Mortensen who opposes what she refers to as “the dynamic imperative” of feminist theory; “the subject of feminist theory” that

[...] posits herself as an active, dynamic, meta-theoretical and subversive being, who is thought capable of subverting – and thus perfecting – the entire edifice of Western patriarchal, phallic thinking, be it in aesthetics, in epistemology or in ethics (2002: 7-8).

This is to say that feminists talk too much and are too hasty about change-facilitation, instead of moving, with Nietzsche and Heidegger, “into proximity with a different terrain of thinking.

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<sup>368</sup> More specifically, their article is a critique of Karin Widerberg’s *Kunnskapens kjønn. Minner, refleksjoner og teori* (1994).

<sup>369</sup> Cf. Widerberg (1994), Gulbrandsen (1995, 1998a), Lotherington and Markussen (1999).

<sup>370</sup> For an elaboration of her view on the relationship between academic and political feminism, see Melby (1995).

A thinking which evokes a tragic, existential mode of thought where the domains of death, destruction and, yes, passivity might be embraced” (op.cit.: 16). However, Mortensen herself also argues for revolutionary changes, in culture and in our scientific approaches – she wants feminists to ‘move’ into ‘a different terrain of thinking’.

Very few seem to think that the thinking of modernity adequately facilitates the changes feminists struggle to achieve, even if there are some defenders who think only relatively minor revisions are needed,<sup>371</sup> and several contributors who emphasize that modern thought, combined with other modes of thought, would together provide the necessary achievements. According to the historian and social philosopher Rune Slagstad, a proper feminism would unite a “liberal-individualist ideology of emancipation“ with “the expressive critique of romanticism” inherent in different “communitarian” proposals (1994: 50, 54).<sup>372</sup> The historian Gro Hagemann reflects along similar lines:<sup>373</sup> Even though she insists that liberalism is lacking “space to reflect on the social context of the individual and hence recognize difference”, she also emphasizes how “the individual project of emancipation [in feminism] finds its legitimacy within liberalism and its abstract individualism and universality” (1997: 29), and how an exaggerated communitarian emphasis on the value of community and solidarity might degenerate into a “nostalgic”, conservative “restoration” (1999: 341). Thus, in Hagemann’s view, liberalism is crucial for a proper feminist radicalism. The conservative danger lies, rather, in an exaggerated communitarianism.<sup>374</sup>

Also, what is wrong, more specifically, with modern change-talk is a subject of disagreement, even if many agree that there is something wrong. For one thing, not all agree that the changes prescribed by the thinking of modernity are too moderate; that it is too much a thinking of the status quo. Some argue in fact that it prescribes changes that are too radical, from a normative point of view,<sup>375</sup> or from the point of view of what is possible.<sup>376</sup> This is in fact to say that feminism ought to or need to be more conservative than defenders of modernity suggest, even

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<sup>371</sup> Cf. Raaum and Skogerbø (1993), Raaum (1995), Bojer (2001), Bugge Tenden (2002), Holst (2002b, 2002c). Some of them argue, however, that these minor revisions may have major implications for how we investigate and assess the gender relationship.

<sup>372</sup> Slagstad mentions Seyla Benhabib’s communicative ethics as an interesting synthesizing proposal.

<sup>373</sup> See for example Hagemann (1994, 1997, 1999, 2003).

<sup>374</sup> For similar reflections on the possible connections between communitarianism and conservatism, see for example Solheim (1997), Nagel (1999), Ketcher (2001), Holst (2002c).

<sup>375</sup> Wærness (1990, 2004) argues that radical modern individualism is community-undermining.

<sup>376</sup> See the references above to discussions of obstacles to change. These obstacles are, many argue, not taken into considerations by the theorists of modernity (see for example Holtan Sørensen 1993, Gulbrandsen 1998a, Flemmen 1999, Egeland, 2003, 2004a, 2004b).

if this is almost never spelled out in such terms.<sup>377</sup> In addition, there are different views on whether the changes should be directed by other aims than the normative aims of modernity. Many link, for example, the modern imaginary to the struggle for ‘equality’ and universalism’, and argue that what are needed instead are changes towards more appreciation of ‘differences’ and ‘context’.<sup>378</sup> Finally, there are disagreements on what kind of changes the thinking of modernity is inadequately conceptualizing and facilitating. Marxist-feminists think for example that this thinking fails to give a proper account of the structural changes feminists ought to be in favor of,<sup>379</sup> while defenders of an ethics of care<sup>380</sup> as well as defenders of poststructuralist approaches<sup>381</sup> think it fails to give a proper account of the cultural changes feminists should strive to facilitate.

## **5.4.2 The patriarchal project of modernity**

### **i) Modern history – a history of patriarchy**

In Irene Iversen’s comments on the project of modernity (5.0), defenders of modernity are depicted as defenders of the institutional and cultural outcomes of modern Western history: They regard modernity as a real sociological configuration, as a progressive configuration; they tend to believe that there has in fact been enlightenment. In her article “Refleksjoner over kjønn og stat”<sup>382</sup> professor in history, Ida Blom, not only questions this optimistic view. She also suggests that the thinking of modernity has influenced the actual historical development in Europe: Its proponents got more or less what they wanted in this part of the world. Thus, their diagnosis about progress should not surprise us. The diagnosis is, however, partial and inaccurate, Blom argues. Modern history is in fact a darker one, especially if we approach it from the point of view of women.

The argument is made in the section of the article where Blom takes a closer look at “the meaning of gender” in the development of “the democratic welfare states” in Europe (1998: 25). Her focus is on “the institutional basis” for “citizenship”, i.e. for the development of individual rights (ibid.). Gender inequalities in the granting of rights can, she notes, be linked

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<sup>377</sup> But some do, like Nina Karin Monsen (2000). Her self-consciously conservative positioning is, however, exceptional.

<sup>378</sup> Cf. Jensen (1990b), Øvrelid (1996a), Valestrand and Gerrard (1999a), Bolsø (2002).

<sup>379</sup> Cf. Gullvåg Holter (1991, 1997), Gulli (1992), Ericsson (1992b).

<sup>380</sup> Cf. Martinsen (1997, 1999).

<sup>381</sup> Cf. Mühleisen (1999, 2000, 2003).

<sup>382</sup> “Reflections on gender and state”.

partly to the fact that military duties have been considered the duties of men. Women have not had these duties, and thus have not been considered legitimate right-holders. However, this state of affairs should not be considered inevitable or “logical”, Blom insists (op.cit.: 26). For one thing, there are several examples of women serving as soldiers. More importantly, women have played a crucial role “behind the lines”, even if they have not participated in combat (ibid.). Moreover, there is no clear connection between men’s participation in combat and their rights as citizens. There are many examples of soldiers who have not been granted full citizenship. Thus, other factors must be added to explain women’s subordinate status in the state.

The most crucial other factor, Blom argues, is the division between “private and public” on which the “democratization of the state” in Europe has depended (op.cit.: 29).<sup>383</sup> Previous to democratization, some women, at least in the elites, had considerable “family based power”, power acquired through marriage and motherhood (op.cit.: 27). Democratization meant “moving [...] the basis of power” away from the family, “from the private to the public” (op.cit.: 29). This moving away is prescribed by the philosophers of modernity; they consider it a basic prerequisite for Enlightenment. Blom refers in this connection to Locke’s *Two Treaties of Government*. Politics should be practiced in the public sphere, Locke argued. However, Blom notes, the public was not a domain for women. Locke considered individuals to have different rights as “public and private persons” (ibid.). Only men, however, were granted rights as public persons. Blom goes on to present Rousseau’s *Le Contract Social* (1762), and his claim, parallel to Locke’s, that only men are citizens or legitimate “contractors” (ibid.). Rousseau developed this idea in *Émile*, where he argued that boys were to be educated into “free, independent, responsible individuals”, equipped for citizenship, whereas girls were to be made into “women whose main aim in life was to serve their husband and raise his children” (op.cit.: 29, 30). This idea of gendered characters was later adopted by Kant. Men denoted “the active, strong, extrovert, rational and instrumental”, women “the passive, weak, submissive, adaptive, emotional and intuitive” (op.cit.: 30). This idea of gendered characters was old, but it was strengthened by the institutionalization of the public-private-distinction, as Locke, Rousseau and Kant prescribed it. To be sure, democratization did not leave women completely powerless. They still had, for example, significant influence in the private sphere, in particular as mothers. Their power was,

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<sup>383</sup> See also 5.4.10.



however, inevitably limited, as issues of most significance were deliberated and decided upon in the public sphere, where women were excluded.

Thus, Blom's argument in this passage rests basically on two claims. First, that the thinking of Locke, Rousseau and Kant<sup>384</sup> have contributed to the shaping of modern European history; there are interconnections between theory and practice, even if we cannot talk of a simple, one-way causal relationship. Second, that this history is less progressive than assumed in this thinking – where it is talked optimistically about 'democratization' – especially, if we look at it from within a feminist horizon.<sup>385</sup> Several contributors consider there to be interconnections of this sort. The historian Elisabeth Gulbrandsen recommends feminists to take a closer look at postmodern thinkers such as Rosi Braidotti and Donna Haraway in their approach to "science and politics", when confronted by the "global environment and development crisis"(1998a: 56),<sup>386</sup> because it is, among others things, the conceptualizations and prescriptions of the modern imaginary that have led to this crisis. Another example is sociologist Øystein Gullvåg Holter, who argues that there are interconnections between "real socialism", as it existed in "the state capitalist countries", for example in Eastern Europe and "ideological", dogmatic "Marxism" (1991: 68).<sup>387</sup> This is a kind of Marxism that considers Marx' theses to be "universally valid", based on "a-historical and non-sociological categories", and is, in an "extreme" way, Gullvåg Holter says, faithful to the prescriptions of the "great narrators" of "bourgeois Enlightenment", who thought that the enlightened, "modern individual" had a "monopoly on truth", that he could "without prejudices [...] view, understand and conceptualize other epochs and other societies", thinking "the light from theory" would "shine" on the "masses still in the dark" (op.cit.: 68, 69).<sup>388</sup>

Gullvåg Holter's sarcastic comment on the optimism of the Enlightenment thinkers is somewhat different from, but nevertheless related to, the second claim put forward by Blom: He emphasizes their optimistic view on what their universalistic philosophy could achieve in history, and its paternalistic and authoritarian subtext. Blom questions the modern optimistic

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<sup>384</sup> Blom recognizes that these are very different thinkers. Their emphasis and elaboration of the public-private-distinction is, however, similar.

<sup>385</sup> For conceptualizations of this point, very similar to Blom's, see for example Melby (1997a, 1997b), Telste (1999), Hagemann (1997, 1999, 2003) and Nagel (1998).

<sup>386</sup> Gulbrandsen's article is on different ways of thinking about science policy.

<sup>387</sup> In contradistinction to "critical Marxism" based on "historical and sociological method" (Gullvåg Holter 1991: 69).

<sup>388</sup> For more variants of this argument, see for example Martinsen (1997), Fyhn (1999), Hellum (1999), von der Lippe (1999), Meyer (1999), Ve (1999a) and Annfelt (2000).

diagnosis of what has in fact happened during the past century, i.e. that we can simply talk about it in terms of democratization.<sup>389</sup> That the thinkers of modernity underscore the darker side of modernity, is also accentuated by other commentators. One example is social anthropologist, Elisabeth L'orange Fürst, who in a discussion of “poststructuralism and French feminism”, focused on Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray and Helen Cixous,<sup>390</sup> stresses the limited results of living up to “bourgeois-egalitarian demands” (1998: 176, 178). “Equality feminists”, by equating these demands with “feminist” demands, and applauding their fulfillment as “progressive”, have contributed, she says (with Cixous), to an unfortunate “legitimation” of “the existing system” and modern “hierarchies of power”, instead of encouraging women to explore and emancipate “otherness”, i.e. “the suppressed and marginalized femininity”, outside “the dominant conceptual scheme” of “phallogocentrism” (op.cit.: 178, 179).<sup>391</sup>

Another example is Tordis Borchgrevink who indicates the limits of rights as a normative notion. When defenders of modernity enthusiastically sum up the spreading of rights, they tend to exaggerate what rights actually give us:

Complete membership in a culture is not given to anyone, it goes without saying, but, fortunately, we have equality and tolerance as a court of appeal for the unworthy. In this court what is offered, however, are only rights, and rights make no-one a cultural insider. One is not made equal by the right to be different (Borchgrevink 1999: 13).

Finally, Hanne Haavind emphasizes the ideological features of the thinking of “modern society” in which “the concept of person is broadened to include women and [to] promote their [women's] access to individual rights, to political representation, to work, to money, to education” (Haavind 1998: 247).<sup>392</sup> This optimistic perspective of “societal change [...] make[s] every new cohort of women capable of seeing themselves as progressing along a pathway of greater access to social arenas” (op.cit.: 248). However, Haavind argues:

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<sup>389</sup> This diagnosis is related to the optimism Gullvåg Holter talks about: Modern history is an outcome of the fact that the bourgeois-liberal philosophers' idealist thinking has in fact influenced real practice.

<sup>390</sup> And their relationship to Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan.

<sup>391</sup> For variants of this argument, more or less inspired by French feminism, more or less critical of 'bourgeois-liberal' normative ambitions and optimistic history-writing, see for example Widerberg (1990), Rudberg (1996), Andersen (1997), Birkeland (1997), Songe-Møller (1999c), Flemmen (1999, 2000), Bolsø (2002), Brandser (2002), Mortensen (1994, 1999, 2002), Findal (2002), Sangholt (2002), Gressgård (2003). The article by L'orange Fürst to which I refer is a rather descriptive account of poststructuralism and French feminism. The author emphasizes, however, her sympathy for such 'difference-feminist' reflections in her conclusion (L'orange Fürst 1998: 198, and elaborates and deliberates further on her position in other works, for example in L'orange Fürst 1995).

<sup>392</sup> For similar reflections, where she answers her critics, see Haavind (2002b).

Power is rendered invisible when men and women acknowledge each other. In cultural contexts where integration is idealized and male dominance is made less legitimate,<sup>393</sup> gender as a reason for social arrangements is concealed. The results are still gendered, but without a cause. A woman increases the probability that she will be valued positively as a woman if she herself co-operates, so that her subordination looks like something else – something she desires. Mutual confirmation of identity cannot be achieved by realizing gender stereotypes, but through being individual and unique. The reciprocal positive message between the male and the female is a double bind: both are dependent on having the other co-operate in having her submissiveness and her dominance appear to be something else (op.cit.: 265).<sup>394</sup>

Many contributors point out or assume Blom's two concerns. However, Blom's first concern is a modest one. She does not consider history to be blueprint of philosophy: History is influenced by a complex web of different social, cultural and ideological factors, Enlightenment philosophy is only one.<sup>395</sup> This is indeed the common way to look at it. Blom's second concern is nuanced, moreover, by her recognition of the modern regime of universal rights as progressive, also from a feminist point of view, even if this is only part of the story, and blown out of proportion by modern observers. Having analyzed the history of gender and state in modern Europe, she concludes that the state has shown a potential to "care for the individual and support the individual's opportunities for autonomy" through the expansion of political citizenship and the development of the welfare state (1998: 43). Thus, the state has what Blom refers to as a "feminine side" from an "instrumental" point of view (ibid).<sup>396</sup> In addition there is its "feminine" side from an "institutional" point of view: Despite the private-public-distinction prescribed by the thinking of modernity, issues of "the family/private sphere" have been turned into issues of "the state/the public"(ibid.).<sup>397</sup> The outcome, at least in Scandinavia, has been "state feminism, an alliance between women inside and outside the political system, and between women and the state" (ibid.).

Several contributors portray, like Blom, the Scandinavian experience as modifying the dark image of modern history assumed in much feminist analysis: Scandinavian social democracy

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<sup>393</sup> Here she is referring to the Nordic countries.

<sup>394</sup> For very similar ideological demasking see Ericsson (1992b), Prieur and Taksdal (1993), Johannessen (1994), Holter (1996b), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002).

<sup>395</sup> See also Blom (1999), and Melby's (1996, 1997) historiographic comments on Blom's work.

<sup>396</sup> A basic question in her article is: "Is it possible that masculine values, defined as physical strength, power and control are the basis of the notion of the state, or has the notion also feminine characteristics, defined as care and peaceful development?" (Blom 1998: 24).

<sup>397</sup> Blom describes this institutional development as a process of feminization.

is depicted as having a women-friendly potential.<sup>398</sup> That modernity has brought progress is also pointed out by others, for example by contributors who stress the greater scope for personal freedom and reflexivity following cultural individualization and de-traditionalization.<sup>399</sup> Thus, sometimes, the analyses of progress of the thinkers of modernity are in fact subscribed to.<sup>400</sup> However, other kinds of perspectives are also drawn upon to conceptualize progress, for example in contributions where modern thought is positioned not as being too optimistic, but rather as being too pessimistic. The media scientist Wencke Mühleisen notes how Habermas' reflection on the bourgeois public sphere represents "a perspective of decline", a "melancholic historical narrative" (2000: 4, 24). Thus, to conceptualize what she considers to be the creative and liberating aspects of contemporary popular culture, Mühleisen relies instead on postmodern cultural theory.<sup>401</sup> Other contributors note the similar pessimistic character of Habermas' theory of modernity, but stress instead the aptness of Habermas' theory on this point.<sup>402</sup> Most often, however, critique of modernity as a sociological configuration is articulated without reference to the philosophers of modernity.<sup>403</sup>

## ii) The modern canon of patriarchal thinkers

Ida Blom's points; that the influence of the thinkers of modernity on state of affairs is unfortunate, and that these thinkers underscore the darker side of modernity, are connected with a widely held related assumption, namely that they are patriarchal thinkers: They actively defend patriarchal relations or indirectly contribute to reproducing such relations, or both. It is because the thinkers of modernity directly or indirectly accept patriarchy that their influence in history is so unfortunate. It is because they consider patriarchy compatible with enlightenment that they fail to recognize patriarchy as the dark side of modernity.

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<sup>398</sup> The terms 'state feminism' and 'woman friendly' are introduced by Helga Hernes. These notions will be more closely examined in Chapter 6. See also van der Ros (1996a, 1996b), Leira (1998), Morken and Selle (1998), Skjeie and Siim (2000), Hernes (2001), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

<sup>399</sup> Cf. Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (1994), Bjerrum Nielsen (1996), Marhrdt (1996), Gentikow (1998), Hellesund (2002), Mühleisen (2003, 2004).

<sup>400</sup> Cf. Raaum (1995), Solheim (1997), Hagemann (1997, 1999), Fjørtoft (1999, 2002), Bojer (2001).

<sup>401</sup> For a similar concern see de Vibe (1993), Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (1994). To be sure, the point of these contributors is not to replace pessimism with optimism, but rather to highlight the ambivalences and gendered character of modernity.

<sup>402</sup> Cf. Jensen (1990a), L'orange Fürst (1995).

<sup>403</sup> The alternative philosophical sources are numerous. It is noteworthy that from the philosophical canon figures such as Foucault (see for example Solli 1999, Songe-Møller 1999c, Bolsø 2002, Markussen 2002), Nietzsche (for example Mortensen 1994, Owesen 2000/2001, Brandser 2002, Sangholt 2002) and Arendt (for example Svenneby 1994, 1999a, 2002, Erichsen 2002, Nicolaysen 2002, Halvorsen 2002) get a far more constructive reception than Habermas, Rawls and Kant, who are rarely considered relevant for feminism.

The patriarchal character of “political liberalism” is elaborated as a main point in the article “Mangfoldets problem: Om kvinner og menn i politisk liberalisme”<sup>404</sup> by political scientist Ann Therese Lotherington (1999). Lotherington’s point of departure is an analysis of the works of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant. What “we find, despite great disagreements on other issues”, is, she says:

[...] a common understanding of gender [...]: For them men were citizens/persons/individuals and were ranked above women, not considered citizens/persons/individuals. Status as person or individual was strongly connected to rights that only men had. Thus, the universal and gender neutral notions (individual, freedom, citizenship, rights and consent) were valid only for men (1999: 176-177).

Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant considered the legitimate state in terms of a social contract:

Their point was to introduce new principles for legitimate government: principles of freedom, equality and consent. The state should be governed by a political community (fraternity) of equal parties (men) that were naturally born free and equal. State legitimacy was to be based on agreement or consent (op.cit.: 177).

What this social contract assumed, however, Lotherington notes, is what Carol Pateman has referred to elsewhere as “the sexual contract”: While “the idea of the social contract made it possible to understand men as free and equal, [...] the thinking of the sexual contract implied men’s right to dominate women and women’s duty to submit to men” (op.cit.: 180).

Moreover, like Blom, Lotherington assumes that the patriarchal thinking of classical liberal philosophy has contributed to creating modern patriarchal society.<sup>405</sup> She argues, furthermore, that “contemporary liberal/contract theoretical thinking” remains as patriarchal as the classical liberalism that has informed and inspired it: Even if “the sexual contract” is often made invisible, it is still very much of “relevance” (op.cit.: 185). Thus, its seemingly gender neutral notions are “based on men’s experiences” (op.cit.: 183),<sup>406</sup> Lotherington says, referring to Ann Phillips. The notions of individual, freedom, citizenship, rights and consent are still not construed so that women, or others that are “different”, may be included:

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<sup>404</sup> “The problem of pluralism: Women and men in political liberalism considered”.

<sup>405</sup> Up until today this thinking remains “the basis of contemporary liberal democracy and the dominant Western understanding of freedom, justice, and so on” (Lotherington 1999: 177).

<sup>406</sup> See also 5.4.7.

Liberalism, as it has been delivered to us historically, has equipped us with a hierarchical way of thinking without tools for constructive treatment of pluralism and difference. In this way the same biases are reproduced in our contemporary theories (op.cit.: 188),

she goes on, referring to Seyla Benhabib. Lotherington's conclusion is that we should ideally, from a feminist point of view, replace liberalism with something else, "better abstractions", or even more preferable, we should stop looking for "better abstractions and rather admit that society consists of women and men with a manifold of wishes about their way of life" (op.cit.: 189). However, she consider this difficult, even impossible,

[...] both because we ourselves are bearers of this philosophical tradition, and because we need to communicate with others inside the same tradition. We talk about words and concepts that are part of the vocabulary of everyday life. We must, therefore, relate to them, but make sure not to forget their patriarchal history (op.cit.: 188).

Similar outlines of the patriarchal commitments and presuppositions of representatives of the project of modernity can be found in several contributions. Sociologist Lise Widding Isaksen criticizes the hierarchical, dichotomous thinking of the modern Western canon. Within this tradition, body, nature and passion, associated with femininity, are rated below mind, culture and reason, associated with masculinity. This has, she argues "contributed in legitimatizing patriarchal control over women" (Widding Isaksen 1994: 21).<sup>407</sup> To lift this patriarchal control, Widding Isaksen argues for a positive reevaluation of the marginalized associated with the feminine.<sup>408</sup>

Cultural theorist Berit von der Lippe's ambition is to "deconstruct" gender as "a significant organizing principle" and "an integral part" of "the deep structure" of society (1999: 52): "Our culture's understanding of morality and ethics, theory of science and notion of human being" is fundamentally "a patriarchal undertaking" (op.cit.: 111). In this connection, she elaborates and criticizes the patriarchal approach exposed in the works of Rousseau and Kant:

Even if neither Rousseau nor Kant can be accused of legitimatizing for example rape, they both move on a border-line with regard to violence, sex and oppression: Both regarded women's submissiveness and obedience as evidently right. Not only are these great

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<sup>407</sup> For similar critiques of the hierarchical, gendered dualisms of the Western canon, in works inspired by French poststructuralism and psychoanalysis (see for example Songe-Møller 1990, 1995, von der Fehr 1991, Soleim 1994, Malterud 1996, 2002, Owesen 2000/2001, L'orange Fürst 1995, 1999, 2002, Findal 2002).

<sup>408</sup> More specifically, she argues for a positive reevaluation of women's care work.

philosophers, they are in a certain sense more: Rousseau received his breakthrough after the French revolution and its slogans of freedom, equality and fraternity. Kant is not only a critic of reason; he is also a philosopher of morality with a high status in contemporary academic discourses (1999: 72).

As alternatives to the modern patriarchal “understanding of morality and ethics, theory of science and notion of human being”, von der Lippe mentions contemporary feminist theorists, such as Donna Haraway, Evelyn Fox Keller, Michelle LeDoeuff, Adrienne Rich, Rosi Braidotti, Vandana Shiva, Lorraine Code, Nancy Hartsock and Sandra Harding, who, despite their internal differences, agree that “man – the universal subject – is dead” (op.cit.: 104). And without the presumption of “an autonomous subject”, von der Lippe concludes,

[...] everything is possible – for both women and men. If we today admit our perspectives are ‘situated knowledges’,<sup>409</sup> that is, if we recognize the opportunity to make partial solutions instead of global theories, we have the possibility to build alliances across gender and ethnicity, [...] to live in a landscape with differences around us and within us [...] on the basis of a non-hierarchical perspective (op.cit.: 104-105).<sup>410</sup>

Many contributors share the view that the modern imaginary is deeply patriarchal, and thus, that it cannot, at least not in any straightforward sense, be engaged in the service of feminist projects. However, this view is often modified in different ways. Several assume or argue that the thinkers of modernity can be of use to feminists, in more or less radically reconstructed versions. Tove Stang Dahl (1994) anchors, for example, her program of women’s law in Kant’s moral reflections on autonomy and integrity.<sup>411</sup> Economist Hilde Bojer (2001) defends a feminist theory of social redistribution based on Rawls’ theory of justice.<sup>412</sup> Political scientist Edle Bugge Tenden (2002) suggests that Rawls’ notion of self-respect should be the basis of sexual harassment law.<sup>413</sup> Some argue for constructive use of Mary Wollstonecraft in contemporary feminism,<sup>414</sup> a few defend explicitly a ‘liberal feminism’,<sup>415</sup> while several emphasize, generally speaking, the significance of framing feminist demands in terms of rights.<sup>416</sup> Philosopher Else Wiestad initiates a “dialogue with an androcentric philosopher”, Kant (1996: 83). She reflects on why she does so:

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<sup>409</sup> She borrows the term from Donna Haraway.

<sup>410</sup> Von der Lippe says of her position: “My ambition here is primarily to highlight rudiments of a radical feminist epistemology” that picks up “Foucauldian threads and a more Marxist inspired feminism” (1999: 98).

<sup>411</sup> On the other hand, she is very critical of conventional liberal approaches to law.

<sup>412</sup> Or rather Susan Moller Okin’s and Martha Nussbaum’s feminist reconstructions of Rawls.

<sup>413</sup> Relying on Drucilla Cornell’s feminist interpretation of Rawls.

<sup>414</sup> Cf. Nagel (1993, 1999), Ryall (1993), Holden Rønning (1993), Wiestad (1993).

<sup>415</sup> Cf. Raaum (1995), Holst (2002).

<sup>416</sup> Cf. Grannes (1995), Wesenberg (1995), Børresen (1995), Widerberg (2000b), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

Depending on our goals and selected points of departure we may today interpret and criticise, but also reinterpret and reformulate what we criticise in patriarchal philosophy. We can even use it as elements within new theoretical frameworks. The question is, do we have to completely reject androcentric thinking as one-sided and impossible to universalise? Or may certain parts of it be transformed and re-coded, and thereby incorporated in a new gender transcending theory? (ibid.)

Thus, even if several contributors to Norwegian feminist meta-reflection do in fact “completely reject androcentric thinking as one-sided and impossible to universalise”, there are also several who, like Wiestad, try to “transform” and “recode” it (ibid.).<sup>417</sup> Some, in this endeavor, rely on feminist theorists such as Seyla Benhabib and Ann Phillips: In contrast to Lotherington and others, who use these figures in dismissive readings of modernity,<sup>418</sup> they interpret them rather as critical re-constructors.<sup>419</sup>

Several authors also assume or argue that modern thought can be of use, if reconstructed and combined with other kinds of thinking: Modern thought can, in Wiestad’s terms, be “incorporated” into a “new gender transcending theory” (ibid.). But it is also sometimes used in more unexpected ways. Elisabeth L’orange Fürst (1995) makes use of Habermas’ notion of communicative rationality in her search for ‘the emancipatory minimum’ in women’s lifeworld;<sup>420</sup> ‘a rationality of the gift’ inherent in women’s household work,<sup>421</sup> that challenges the imperializing instrumental rationality of capitalist production.<sup>422</sup> Social anthropologist Jorun Solheim is in an original move both relying on and criticizing Seyla Benhabib’s distinction between the concrete other and the generalized other, when elaborating two concepts of modern identity, one based on the idea of “the abstract individual”, “equal” in an “ideal and universal” sense, considered disconnected from “concrete differences” (1998: 81), and the other based on a notion of “the qualitatively different and distinct with each and

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<sup>417</sup> In contradistinction to, for example, Stang Dahl who argues for an extension of Kantian moral philosophy; in order to grant women the status of autonomous persons, Wiestad uses the “Kantian ethics of feminine pleasure” developed in *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen* (1762) in the development of a feminist ethics of care, paralleling the thoughts of Carol Gilligan and Anette Baier (1996: 86, see also 5.4.13)

<sup>418</sup> Benhabib is, for example, often considered a representative of a feminist ethics of care critical of or even in opposition to the modern focus on ‘justice’ and ‘rights’ (see for example Schmidt 1998, Ve 1999a, 1999b, Fjortoft 2002).

<sup>419</sup> See for example Raaum (1995) on Phillips, Hagemann (1994), Iversen (1999) and Stamnes (2000) on Benhabib.

<sup>420</sup> She refers, among others, to Ulrike Prokop, Oscar Negt and Alexander Kluge.

<sup>421</sup> L’orange Fürst analyzes the cultural connections between women, notions of femininity and the making and providing of food (see also 5.4.12).

<sup>422</sup> L’orange Fürst does not defend a feminism transcending gender, but a feminism re-conceptualizing and positively reassessing femininity.



every one of us as a social being” (op.cit.: 82). These two concepts, identity based on a notion of equality and identity based on a notion of intimacy or closeness, are, Solheim argues, concepts on

[...] different levels of abstraction. I can therefore not agree totally with Seyla Benhabib<sup>423</sup> when she in the discussion of modern ethics of care vs. universal ethics puts the ideas about ‘the concrete other’ vs. ‘the generalized other’ as a possible *continuum*. We talk here about ideas on different levels, they belong to different logical types (original emphasis, op.cit.: 87).

Moreover, there are contributors who emphasize that some of the thinkers of modernity have much of value to offer feminists, even if others have not. The historians Gro Hagemann and Klas Åmark (1999) argue, for example, that the liberal contract tradition can be used to justify illegitimate power relations, as in the case of Thomas Hobbes defense of the absolute rule of Leviathan. But it can also be used to justify revolt against illegitimate rule, as in the political philosophy of John Locke.<sup>424</sup> Some authors consider classical liberal philosophers as a progressive force in their time, despite the patriarchal features of their thinking.<sup>425</sup> In the contemporary setting, however, more radical approaches are needed.<sup>426</sup> Others suggest the opposite: They stress the significance and sophistication of contemporary liberalism, and contrast it with the less sophisticated classical liberalism.<sup>427</sup>

Furthermore, some recognize indeed that the thinking of modernity is persuasively patriarchal. However, they note that most other alternative approaches available are equally inadequate for feminist purposes: The thinking of modernity needs to be ‘transformed’ and ‘recoded’, just like other kinds of thinking that were originally articulated and shaped without

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<sup>423</sup> She refers to Seyla Benhabib’s *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*.

<sup>424</sup> Hagemann and Åmark also represent a tendency found in some contributions to position liberalism primarily as a historical project which aims have been more or less achieved, and thus, with limited relevance today. See also Ellingsæter’s (1999) overview of different notions of patriarchy, where ‘liberal feminism’ is connected to the period of gender roles, before the second-wave feminism of the 1970s.

<sup>425</sup> Beatrice Halsaa (1996) who in several passages equates liberal with conservative ideology (see 5.4.1), admits that classical liberal philosophy played a progressive role at the time of its genesis. This is also noted by Hege Skjeie and Helga Hernes who emphasize the crucial role of “the feminist engagement as a liberal individualism confronting patriarchal norms and practices” in nineteenth-century Norway (1997: 363). Brita Gulli credits John Locke for giving the problem of “patriarchal authority” more thorough consideration than many contemporary liberals (1992: 11).

<sup>426</sup> Turid Markussen argues that the time now has come to analyze and criticize the “more subtle ways gender-based injustice and oppression works”, in particular in a country like Norway where typically liberal feminist demands have already been achieved through “law and other political efforts” (2002: 235).

<sup>427</sup> Cf. Teigen (2000), Bugge Tenden (2002), Holst (2002a, 2002b), Fjørtoft (2002).

considering feminist concerns.<sup>428</sup> This seems to be the rationale behind a certain tendency among some contributors to rely as far as possible on the works of female theorists and on theory that is explicitly feminist.<sup>429</sup>

### 5.4.3 The abstractions of modernity

In her dissertation *Women's Human Rights and Legal Pluralism in Africa. Mixed Norms and Identities in Infertility Management in Zimbabwe* (1999), professor of women's law, Anne Hellum, singles out three approaches to human rights law. In addition to the "universalist" and the "culture-relativist" approach, there is the so-called "pluralist" approach that she herself uses in her study "of how people manage their procreative problems in Zimbabwe" (op.cit.: 411).

The universalist approach is represented by "the liberal political and philosophical discussion about women's rights and human rights" that focuses on "the apparent incommensurability of individual rights and collective rights", for example in African women's "identities as members of an extended family network" typically regarded as "a major obstacle to the implementation of women's human rights" (ibid.). This is the approach of the United Nations Women's Convention, where "a hierarchy of values which sets women's individual rights up against the rights of the group", has been established (ibid.). The approach is, Hellum argues, premised on a mixture of "modernization theory", "liberal Western feminist jurisprudence" and the "centralist legal theory which is the dominant doctrinal position in Western legal science" (op.cit.: 413, 414). Modernization theory, like "Rostow's liberal political and economic theory", assumes that it is "the traditional customs and practices" that are "the major barrier to economic development" (op.cit.: 413). Development is considered "an imitative process", during which the less developed countries gradually assume the qualities of more developed Western countries (op.cit.: 414).<sup>430</sup> The proponents of "modernization" claim, falsely in Hellum's opinion, that "international human rights like gender equality, self-

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<sup>428</sup> Widding Isaksen, for example, criticizes philosophy and sociology in general for their suppression of the body, nature and passions, i.e. all that is associated with the feminine. This goes for the thinking of modernity, as defined here, but also for canonical figures in the history of philosophy, such as Descartes and Plato, and the sociological classics, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim and Max Weber.

<sup>429</sup> Consider for example the contributions of Karin Widerberg and Hanne Haavind.

<sup>430</sup> Ester Boserup had criticized "the inherent gender bias of international law and development policies", and pointed out "the need for an international and national legal framework that would combat the differential treatment of women and men in the Third World" (Hellum 1999: 413). Boserup's criticism, however, Hellum notes, left the notion of development as "an imitative process" essentially untouched (op.cit.: 414).

determination and freedom are and must be the same everywhere, [...] regardless of time and space” (ibid.). This is also how “the problem of difference” is typically dealt with in Western “centralist legal theory”: “The problem of difference is resolved on the basis of the idea of the existence of overriding norms and values; [...] coherence and harmony between different norms and values is ensured through the establishment of a hierarchy of values and sources”, of the same kind in all contexts: It is a position that is interested in “the similarities between human beings, groups and situations, regardless of their different social and cultural contexts” (ibid.). A strategy of “same” treatment is also prescribed by liberal feminists: “Liberal feminists have worked to reform the law and to remove legal barriers to women being treated the same as men in the public and private sphere” (op.cit.: 412). They have however, correctly according to Hellum, been criticized “by a difference-oriented Western feminist jurisprudence” that emphasizes “the male bias [...] inherent in the gender neutral equal status discourse”,<sup>431</sup> and by “American, African and Asian feminists” who have shown how liberal feminism “assumes a privileged ethnocentric universality” (ibid.).

However, she goes on, the universalist approach should not be replaced by the relativist approach:

[...] the culture-relativist approach regards different value systems as unique and incompatible units. Culture relativists deny that conflicts between values from different traditions can be settled in any reasonable way. What is reasonable is itself a product of particular cultures and societies. Overriding standards for the resolution of value conflicts do not exist (op.cit.: 418).

The problem with such an approach, according to Hellum, is that it excludes the possibility of “dialogue and change” (ibid.). On the one hand, her study of the management of procreative problems in Zimbabwe shows the limits of the universalist approach:

On the basis of the data collected for the purpose of this study it can be assumed that the beneficiaries of the modern family law that embody equal access to procreative measures in marriage and equal rights upon divorce are the Christian, urban, middle-aged and middle-class women (op.cit.: 415).

The “large groups of childless women” resort, however, to “procreative remedies that are embodied in extended family relationships” (op.cit.: 415). For these groups of women it

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<sup>431</sup> Hellum relies in this connection on the ‘difference-oriented’ perspective developed by the pioneer in Norwegian women’s law, Tove Stang Dahl.

would be better to rely on “family-based and gender-specific solutions to procreative problems” (op.cit.: 417): “[...] the mechanical adoption of international human rights principles in general, and the non-discrimination principle in particular”, contribute to “uprooting” these solutions, and might “exacerbate rather than alleviate their [the women’s] problems” (ibid.).<sup>432</sup> On the other hand, however, the relativist approach is equally inadequate, as it tends “to see international human rights law and African customs and practices as essentially separate and incompatible systems of norms”, when in fact, if we study how “families, chiefs, healers and community courts” interpret customs as well as human rights based legislation, the significant point is “how the different norms and values are merged in ways which lead to more situationally based outcomes for the parties” (op.cit.: 419-420). Thus, we have, Hellum argues, “a situation where a wide range of international and legislated norms are merged with local norms, perceptions and values in complex chains of human relationships”, in other words, “as demonstrated by this study, a basis for dialogue and change” (op.cit.: 420). This is precisely the situation that is captured by the third “pluralist, processual and contextual” approach (op.cit.: 421):

In an attempt to reconcile conflicting human rights values like gender equality and cultural diversity in a dynamic, flexible and situation-sensitive manner, the emerging pluralist alternative is trying to define a space between universalism and relativism [...].[...] it offers an in between solution, and places conflicting values within a cultural context while simultaneously giving rise for dialogue and change. Pluralists recognize the existence of primary values. They accept that conflicts among primary values can be resolved by appealing to some reasonable ranking of the values in question. As regards conflicts between human rights values like gender equality and the protection of culture and custom the answer lies in analyzing the conflicting values in the social and cultural context in which the individuals concerned live and act (ibid.).

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<sup>432</sup> This might also be recommendable in other parts of the world: “In all parts of the world we are witnessing the erosion of human relationships through excessive focus upon the individual. The fact that women’s quest for dignity and protection comes into conflict with the conceptualization of the spouses as two free and autonomous individuals is not an exotic African phenomenon. For example, whether the mutual obligation to support each other in the marriage is compatible with the principle of gender equality has been the subject of intense discussion in connection with the ongoing reform of the Scandinavian marriage laws” (Hellum 1999: 415-416). In this connection Hellum draws also on works by the influential Norwegian sociologist of law, Vilhelm Aubert, and by Scandinavian women’s law scholars, such as Tone Sverdrup and Kirsten Ketcher in addition to Stang Dahl. In Aubert’s view “the fragmentation of Family Law into Women’s Law and Children’s Law in Norway shows how the family has been undermined as a basic social and legal institution. In Aubert’s view, unless the underlying socio-economic trends are reversed, it is improbable that the unfortunate side-effects of the rights-oriented individualism that characterizes the present legal situation can be reversed by legislation or court practice” (op.cit.: 415). The women’s law scholars emphasize “the need of a legal framework that transgresses the dichotomous divisions between women as individually waged workers and women as family caretakers” (ibid.).

This implies, Hellum says, a “grounded theory” perspective combined with “the methodological perspective of taking women as the starting point”;<sup>433</sup> “theoretical generalization” about “how individual justice is achieved by specific groups of women in specific situations and contexts” is constantly connected to “empirical knowledge about women’s lived experiences and local practices and procedures” (op.cit.: 32).

In Hellum’s argument there are several stages that deserve closer consideration. In this connection I want to focus on two related claims – that modern thought about what is right and just is too abstract, and that its prescriptions for justice therefore need to be corrected by empirical knowledge about the concrete cases in which the prescriptions are to be applied. These two claims occur, together, in several of the contributions. Elaborations similar to Hellum’s can be found in contributions which discuss the justification and implementation of rights in non-Western cultures as well as in increasingly multi-ethnic Western societies.<sup>434</sup> Professor in sociology, Kari Wærness (1995), discusses a different problem, relying however on a similar argument. She criticizes what she, along with Susan Bordo,<sup>435</sup> regards as “a race for theory” in contemporary academic gender studies: “We need to consider the degree to which this serves not the empowerment of diverse cultural voices and styles, but the academic hegemony of metatheoretical discourse” (op.cit.: 21), she says. Feminists should concentrate less on elaborating, defending and dissecting abstract notions and standards, and more on doing concrete empirical research and “middle-range”-theorizing<sup>436</sup> (op.cit.: 20). Normative problems should be dealt with and resolved as they occur in ongoing research:

Using sociological imagination and methods, concepts and theoretical approaches that we are already familiar with, focusing on what could be important from the perspective of women’s politics and result in social criticism, those of us doing women’s studies have several tasks ahead of us. We need [...] relevant knowledge about [...] the increased significance of the market economy, the crisis of the welfare state, the increasing unemployment and the developments in biotechnology [...]. For me this kind of research into [...] ordinary women’s lives [...] is the main answer to the postmodern challenge [...], because there is less risk of generalizing in the way postmodernists are warning us about, [...] avoiding internal-theoretical discourse (op.cit.: 22).

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<sup>433</sup> In addition to Stang Dahl, Hellum’s theoretical source of inspiration on this point, is Ulrike Prokop’s critique of a “public equality policy [...] becoming increasingly detached from the female lifeworld” (Hellum 1999: 417).

<sup>434</sup> Cf. Bredal (1994), Haugestad (1995), Borchgrevink (2002), Jacobsen and Gressgård (2002), Thorbjørnsrud (2003).

<sup>435</sup> She refers to Bordo’s article “Feminism, Postmodernism and Gender-Scepticism”.

<sup>436</sup> She refers to Robert Merton.

This parallels Hellum's approach: Relativist and postmodernist critique of "the great narratives" target the abstract moral principles defended in the thinking of modernity (ibid.), but not the context-sensitive, empirically well-grounded approach to normative problems Hellum and Wærness defend.<sup>437</sup> An example of this move from a different context is professor in philosophy Vigdis Songe-Møller's (2000/2001) discussion of the feminism of Simone de Beauvoir and Toril Moi, one of Beauvoir's present-day interpreters. This is a feminism, Songe-Møller argues, concerned with "the opposition between freedom on the one hand and alienation and oppression on the other" when asking what it is to be a woman, to be embodied as a woman, to be in a woman's "situation"<sup>438</sup> (op.cit.: 231). However, freedom, alienation and oppression should not be reduced to topics of abstract academic debate:<sup>439</sup> "Only the study of concrete situations, of concrete experiences of what it is to be a woman, can give an answer to the question [what is a woman]. And the answer will never contain any universal, or normative, definition of woman" – of what it is to be free, alienated or oppressed in a woman's situation – "but will always be connected to given, social contexts" (ibid.).

Yet another, still different, example is Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg's analysis of the interconnections between the normative horizon of the modern imaginary and the particular "experience of modernity" from a "male, middle-class perspective" (1994: 50). Their presupposition is that "universal morality" might be transformed if women's experiences and moral orientations were to be included in the picture, in ways, however, that are not easily grasped:

In the last phase of modernity we see several contradictory signs [...]. On the one hand, the tendency for both traditional female responsibility (towards the family) and traditional male responsibility (towards society) is in the process of disappearing. On the other hand, there is the tendency for the morality of care to make an advance into public life and for universal morality to enter family life. We do not know if the result will be that men and women will develop though integrating the weakly developed side (women's care values will become universal/public, men's autonomy will provide a breath of fresh air in family relations) or whether we are moving towards a fin-de-siècle society of self-centered aesthetes in which both men and women have their gender-specific life-styleprojects (ibid.).

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<sup>437</sup> For reflections similar to Wærness' on this point, see Kaul (1998), Sørensen (1999), Ve (1999a), Syltevik (2000).

<sup>438</sup> "In line with Sartre and Merleau-Ponty she [Beauvoir] talks about the body as *situation*" (original emphasis, Songe-Møller 2000/2001: 230-231).

<sup>439</sup> She refers to Moi's criticism of "the theoretical machinery" and "the fantastic level of abstraction" in contemporary feminist theory (Songe-Møller 2000/2001: 230).

Finally, in a study inspired by Michel Foucault's notion of discourses (discourses that "constitute truth and reality") and Bruno Latour's analysis of "science in action", philosopher Cathrine Egeland traces the "conditions of production" of the norm of "gender equality" (2001: 53, 56, 58, ). Criteria of what is true, real, right and scientific are, she argues, often presented as universal, beyond "culture", when they are in fact cultural "products" of particular "discourses" in "action", constituted by the modern "culture of no culture" (op.cit.: 57). The norm of gender equality is, in her view, a special case of this general pattern. The feminist defenders of modernity present gender equality as universal, objective and impartial, when it is in fact a normative product of certain discursive "conditions", and more specifically, of what is allowed for within "the frame of phallogocentrism".<sup>440</sup> Instead of maintaining and defending abstract norms of this sort – which is to defend an illusion, as they are all culturally embedded – feminists should focus on clarifying their genealogy, their embeddedness in complexes of "power/knowledge" (op.cit.: 66), and on "limited destabilizing interventions in the practices establishing and regulating gender identity" (op.cit.: 64), as prescribed by among others Judith Butler.<sup>441</sup> Again, what is recommended, is to correct, even replace, the abstract morality of modernity with concrete political interventions and context-sensitive studies of what is actually going on in social life.<sup>442</sup>

Thus, we see a critique of modern abstractness in very different contributions; in Wærness' defense of a kind of problem-oriented empiricism from 'the perspective of women's politics', but also in Egeland's deconstructive but normative endeavor, that of "undermining the hegemonic gender norms" (op.cit.: 63). Generally speaking, the critique is common, even common-sense: Most contributors accept that the modern view is too abstract. Fewer elaborate on what exactly is abstracted away, and why, more specifically, abstraction generally, and the abstractions of the modern view in particular, are indefensible.

Some, however, articulate elaborated dissent. In a discussion of gender in economics, Kristin Dale argues that several of the "assumptions" made in influential economic theories, as well as the "use" of such theories can be criticized from a feminist perspective (1992: 248).<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>440</sup> She refers to the works of Luce Irigaray.

<sup>441</sup> In her book *Gender Trouble*.

<sup>442</sup> In Egeland's case, what are recommended, however, are not simply empirical studies: Neither Irigaray's notion of phallogocentrism nor Foucault's notion of discourse are meant as simple empirical notions. This also goes for Songe-Møller/Moi/Beauvoir's notion of 'women's situation' (see 5.4.14).

<sup>443</sup> She refers to Vilfred Pareto, John Maynard Keynes, John Rawls, Ronald Dworkin, Amartya Sen, Kenneth J. Arrow and John Roemer as the central figures in the development of theory and philosophy in economics in the

However, these theories should not be dismissed simply because they are abstract, “deductive” and “axiomatic” (op.cit.: 247). On the contrary, feminists can use such theories for their own analytical purposes, for example when they study how different goods are distributed between women and men, if the assumptions are rearticulated.<sup>444</sup> Jorun Solheim’s points out that “generalization and abstraction” are fundamental in all “human thinking”, also in “thinking” from a feminist perspective (1999: 86). Thus, she urges feminists not to dismiss the abstract “logic of equality” on which the “universal criteria” of the “ethics of rights” is based, simply because it is abstract:

The fundamental quality of equality is to be an *abstraction* from the embodied and concrete. To equate something with something else implies to put aside substantial, physical qualities and distinctions – the concrete appearance of things. This does not mean that these qualities and distinctions disappear, the concrete [...] is suspended to introduce a new level of meaning – a *meta-level* where equality is established exactly ‘in abstracto’. [...] In much of contemporary feminist/postmodern debate this point seems to be missed – equality vs. difference is elaborated as a flat opposition on the same level. This creates a pretty strange discussion, where what is forgotten is that generalization and abstraction are fundamental aspects of all human thinking. [...] Equality [...] implies in other words *a shift in the level of meaning* through meta-communication, a *re-presentation* of the concrete in an ideal form or abstract category. [...] Equality is an ideal unit – a regulative idea if you want – it does not ‘correspond’ to anything of substance in the world (original emphasis, 1999: 85-86).

Thus, a few commentators, such as Dale and Solheim, counter the feminist main-stream, and defend explicitly the abstractions of modernity. In addition, there are commentators who defend different abstract moves in other connections. One example is the critical article on Karin Widerberg’s *Kunnskapens kjønn*<sup>445</sup> in which Hanne Davidsen, Susanna M. Solli and Elisabeth Waaler defend a feminist sociology that eschews naive “phenomenological” theorizing based on women’s everyday experiences: There are no everyday experiences shared by all women, and experiences occur never “in natura”; they cannot be “described without being interpreted”, they argue (1996: 100). Instead, “theoretical sociology needs to abstract the social forms<sup>446</sup> of interchange and tension” between individual and society, to facilitate “epistemological breaks”<sup>447</sup> with the notions and knowledge of “the lifeworld” (op.cit.: 109). Another example is sociologist Hildur Ve who reacts to “postmodernists” who

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twentieth-century, whereas Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Jeremy Bentham, T.R. Malthus, David Ricardo and Karl Marx are introduced as the founding fathers of the discipline.

<sup>444</sup> For example “individuals” not “households” should be the unit in studies of distribution, or the welfare of women and children will be overlooked (Dale 1992: 250).

<sup>445</sup> Widerberg’ book is introduced thoroughly in 5.4.5.

<sup>446</sup> Referring to Georg Simmel’s notion of social forms.

<sup>447</sup> Referring to Pierre Bourdieu.



deem “the idea of a universal female identity” as “essentialist” (1999a: 133). To give a definition of women’s situation and perspectives is not necessarily to claim anything about the essence of women’s situation and perspectives; few of us are “Platonists”, she adds (op.cit.: 137). “Categories are what we make them to be” (ibid.). Having “certain purposes in mind” it is “legitimate do discuss women as a category” which has “certain characteristics” different from those of “the category of men” (ibid.). To abstract in this sense, to create categories that include some things and exclude others, is how we “use language” (ibid.).

The argument that abstract morality should be replaced by a normative approach that is empirically grounded, depends on the presupposition that abstraction, or a certain kind of abstraction is problematic, but also on the assumption that prescriptions, the normative, can be transformed by fuller descriptions, by empirical elaboration. The latter assumption is also questioned, at least indirectly, by some of the contributors. Political scientists Hege Skjeie and Helga Hernes (1997) emphasize the difference between describing and prescribing in feminism. They define feminist inquiry as “a knowledge project” and as a “project of transformation [...] coupled to a normative ambition” (op.cit.: 366), i.e. as projects that need separate consideration. In Norwegian feminism the latter project has suffered; they argue that the debate on normative issues has been too limited. Comparing international and Norwegian debates on gender in political science, they conclude that: “[...] whereas this debate [the international debate on democracy] has much to offer women’s research in Norway, when it comes to explicit normative reflection, Norwegian women’s research can offer in return much reflection on the experiences with” concrete “strategies” (op.cit.: 373). The importance of distinguishing between empirical descriptions and moral argumentation is also stressed by philosopher Camilla Serck-Hanssen in her dismissive reading of an attempt to synthesize Kantian moral philosophy and feminist care ethics:<sup>448</sup>

To the extent the duty to treat others as ends in themselves is similar to the duty to care, we have both a wholly different justification of why care is important when making moral assessments, and not least a wholly different understanding of care. For Kant it would be absurd to oblige someone to *feel* anything. Thus care has an intellectual character. Obviously, Kant agrees that care also has an empirical character that is experienced and felt and that might even help us as we strive to become superior moral beings. However, the connection to this feeling is a contingent fact, and moral evaluations can therefore never be justified simply by reference to it (2000/2001: 225).

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<sup>448</sup> Serck-Hanssen comments on Herta Nagl-Docekal’s article “Feminist Ethics: How it Could Benefit from Kant’s Moral Philosophy”, in *Re-reading the Canon. Feminist Interpretations of Immanuel Kant*.

Thus, Serck-Hanssen argues, moral norms cannot be justified by referring to contingent empirical phenomena like our sentiments.<sup>449</sup>

#### 5.4.4 Critique of the modern autonomous subject

Linked to the argument that the thinking of modernity is too abstract, is a varied and widespread critique of the modern idea of the autonomous subject. In her book *Ekte kvinne? Identitet på kryss og tvers*<sup>450</sup> sociologist of religion Eva Lundgren's ambition is to facilitate the emergence of what she refers to as a new "paradigm" within feminist studies (2001: 24). Central to this new paradigm is a defense of a "hermeneutical", "contextual" notion of the "actor", the "subject" or the "I" as "embodied", "social", "relational" and "interacting" (op.cit.: 24, 26, 28, 30). In her elaboration of this new notion of the subject, Lundgren relies on a magnitude of philosophical and sociological sources, from Gadamer, Heidegger, Wittgenstein, Merleau-Ponty and Mead to contemporaries such as Richard Senneth, Charles Taylor and Seyla Benhabib.<sup>451</sup> Together they give a "modern-critical" portrayal of the self which, according to Lundgren, differs from and is preferable to the "modern" portrayal of the self drawn within "the Enlightenment project" (op.cit.: 278, 281).<sup>452</sup>

The Enlightenment notion of the self relies on "the Cartesian dualisms"; between "nature" and "culture", the "subject" and the "body", as well as an "inner-outer" distinction: Behind outer social, cultural and biological differences there are considered to be "individual persons" with "a substance, an identity", with "inherent characteristics and qualities" common to "all humans" (op.cit.: 278, 279). What is unfortunate in these dichotomous abstractions is that those who rely on them consider them not as abstractions but as perfect representations, when in fact "real life, human beings of flesh and blood, daily life" are not "dual" in the sense the Cartesian dichotomous scheme suggests. Moreover, the dichotomous abstractions are

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<sup>449</sup> From the Kantian perspective Serck-Hanssen and Nagl-Docekal have in common.

<sup>450</sup> *Real Woman? Crisscrossing Identity*.

<sup>451</sup> She refers also to Norwegian philosophers and sociologists, such as Jakob Meløe, Kjell S. Johannessen and Willy Guneriussen.

<sup>452</sup> Lundgren's critique of modernity is also introduced as an alternative to the postmodern notion of the subject, exemplified by Judith Butler: "In postmodern theories the individual subject is either determined by collective discourses, or disconnected from the collective level and thus self-absorbed (an individualist individual); it is reduced to non-relational non-identity. [...] the focus [is] on what the individual is *in itself*, whether it is a product of the collective or an aestheticized surface independent of the collective" (original emphasis, 2001: 280). The notion of the individual 'in itself' that postmodernists, paradoxically, adopt from the discourses of modernity (i.e. essentially the notion is not 'post-' at all), is what Lundgren wants to challenge.

inadequate qua abstractions. Lundgren stresses that “analytical distinctions are by definition simplifications” (op.cit.: 39); there is no such thing as a complete representation. The fact that real life is more complex and less ordered than the Cartesian scheme orders it to be, is not in itself a problem for the proponents of this scheme, unless of course they fail to recognize that the scheme is in fact a simplified conceptualization and ordering of real life. The problem is rather that the Cartesian “analytical distinctions” are not suited to feminist investigations (ibid.). Lundgren’s critical point is “methodological”: It is impossible to adequately understand “the creation of meaning and identity”, in particular the meaning of gender and gender identity, on the basis of these distinctions; they “close, shut, yes, limit or simplify to the extent that they confuse more than guide” feminist inquiry (ibid.).

Tied to the Cartesian approach to human beings as something “in themselves”, as “detached” and “isolated” from one another, is the notion of individual autonomy (op.cit.: 293): The modern self-identical subject is framed as autonomous. Indeed, the human person is more or less autonomous; “outer” social, cultural and biological factors might facilitate but also limit his or her possibilities of deliberating, deciding and acting autonomously. However, our capacity for “reason”, conceived by the modern as a “quality” that is “inherent” and shared by “all humans”, also gives us qua human individuals a unique capacity for autonomy (op.cit.: 169). Lundgren argues that the thinking of modernity misconceives and exaggerates the possibility of “detached “ individual self-government: “I’ can never be master of my own house, as the household consists of others with concrete wishes, needs, demands – and who, thus, remind me that I myself have all these things” (op.cit.: 26). This argument for the possibility of autonomy is also a premise when defenders of modernity argue that individual autonomy is our right. Lundgren characterizes the moral emphasis on “autonomy”, “rights and justice” as “male”: To become men in our society is intimately connected with adopting this moral approach (op.cit.: 169). When “moral judgments” are made on the basis of “abstract and universalizing principles and rules”, when “the moral imperatives are respect for other human beings, reciprocal non-interference and the equal worth of persons”, and when we deal with “an ethic of justice or rights” based on a “liberal and humanist notion of a human being, characterized by individualism and autonomy”, then we speak of a “male moral voice” (op.cit.: 169, 170). Carol Gilligan has defended instead the supremacy of a “different

female voice”, based on her studies of girls’ moral socialization (op.cit.: 169).<sup>453</sup> The “different” voice is characterized by

[...] contextualism, particularism, care and responsibility. [...] moral judgment is not to be based on principles deduced from reason, but also on sentiments like empathy. All human beings stand in the middle of a network of relations, and the notion of human beings is thus relational and not individualist. The moral imperatives are [...] primarily that we should care and not hurt each other or ourselves (ibid.).

Lundgren emphasizes that her own “moral-philosophical” ambitions are limited (op.cit.: 45). Moreover, she does not subscribe generally to Gilligan’s approach, which in her view encourage women in effect “not to protest or confront those harassing them as well as not demand respect and rights, but instead take on a huge responsibility for caring” (op.cit.: 170).<sup>454</sup> However, like Gilligan, Lundgren defends a “relational” notion of the self, in opposition to modern ideas, and argues that the relational character of the self has moral implications:

Basic notions like joy, grief, life-spirit, dignity, shame, shamelessness, honor and so on, says something not only about how a human being relates to reality on an abstract level, in principle. The notions refer to norms and values that are considered important to adhere to or oppose, and in every day life they are intimately connected with our embodiment. [...] they are norms and values that cannot be disconnected from human embodiment [...], and the large universes of symbols and social organization of which the living embodied subjects are part. Grief, joy, dignity and so on are words related to what it means to be an individual in a particular context, with a certain identity (op.cit.: 300-301).

Thus, Lundgren for one thing does not want the discussion on “norms and values” to be governed by the modern “male” vocabulary of “autonomy”, “justice” and “rights” (ibid.). More importantly, she argues that the decision to “adhere to” or “oppose” “norms and values” cannot be made on the basis of modern abstract reasoning (ibid.). To do what is right and good is something we learn in embodied discourse and interaction where we meet one another as concrete persons with “concrete wishes, needs and demands” (op.cit.: 26).

Lundgren’s critique of the modern subject contains several elements, which are elaborated in different ways by other contributors. First, there is the critique of the abstractions on which

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<sup>453</sup> In her book *In a Different Voice* Gilligan criticizes Lawrence Kohlberg’s model for moral development, which connects moral maturity with the adoption of ‘an ethic of justice and rights’, for reflecting boys’ moral socialization.

<sup>454</sup> In addition, she argues that Gilligan, like Nancy Chodorow, Evelyn Fox Keller and others who rely on the social-psychological object-relation theory, still works within the Cartesian dualist scheme (Lundgren 2001: 188-189).

descriptions of the modern subject are based. Many contributors raise similar concerns, whether they consider abstraction generally suspect,<sup>455</sup> or whether they, like Lundgren, disapprove of the particular categorizations and distinctions relied on in the construction of the modern subject. In an article on “life and caring in the light of Hegel’s ‘Phenomenology of Spirit’”, philosopher Ingunn Elstad criticizes “the contract theorists” for making “the isolated individuals” or the “individual, self-sufficient man” their “only scope” (1992: 147, 156, 157, 158):<sup>456</sup>

Hobbes [...] thought that humans should be regarded initially as mushrooms, as not being involved with each other at all. For Hobbes, modern society is thus the coming-together of alienated individuals (op.cit.: 156).<sup>457</sup>

This, however, is a “fiction”, Elstad argues: “Consciousness knows itself only as it is recognized by others” (ibid.). This was the central insight of Hegel. However, she goes on,

[...] the concept of mutual recognition, where sociality and individuality simultaneously presuppose each other, continues to make symmetrical relations the basis of society [...]. [...] the concept of symmetry is not complemented by a conception of dialectically productive asymmetry (ibid.)

Thus, what Elstad calls for, referring among others to the Norwegian philosopher Kari Martinesen and the Swedish philosopher Ulla Holm,<sup>458</sup> is the notion of a subject that recognizes that it is embedded in inevitably “asymmetrical relations” which oblige us to “care” for each other:

Caring is the universal structure necessary for keeping each individual alive from birth, [...] the only activity in modern society which takes account of vulnerability and dependency as realities throughout life (op.cit.: 158).

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<sup>455</sup> See 5.4.3.

<sup>456</sup> In addition to Hegel she refers to Aristotle and Marx in elaborating this point, but also contemporary theorists such as Charles Taylor, Benjamin Barber and Seyla Benhabib.

<sup>457</sup> Hobbes is often referred to when the modern subject is under attack, sometimes elaborately: “[...] Hobbes’ mechanical model of human nature does [not] include the traits traditionally ascribed to women, like for example sociability, nursing and care for helpless and dependent persons. In the Hobbesian universe the individual – *man* – is primarily motivated by fear of being deprived of satisfying his desires, which are anti-social and boundless [...] human beings are naturally lonely, [...] social relations are not natural” (original emphasis, L’orange Fürst 1995: 196).

<sup>458</sup> And her *Modrande och praxis* (1995). Also referred to is Hans Jonas: “[...] the consciousness of asymmetry, in its form of responsibility for the weak, seems to transcend the mere self-consciousness of mutual recognition. It is the dependent person who demands, while the one who has power, becomes obliged, as Hans Jonas puts it” (Elstad 1992: 161).

Another example of critique against the abstract construction of the modern subject is the literary scholar Drude von der Fehr's critical analysis of Richard Rorty's notion of "identity as narrative practice" (1995: 168). Feminism, according to Rorty, is about women's struggle to invent "new moral identities for themselves by getting semantic authority over themselves" (op.cit.: 167): The feminist project has moved into the domain of "discourse ethics" (op.cit.: 168). Von der Fehr argues against this reduction of the subject's "experience" to "a linguistic happening" (op.cit.: 174): "There is something about experience that cannot be articulated and something with our thinking that cannot be reduced to cognition" – there is "non-discursive experience" (op.cit.: 174, 175). Rorty's perspective makes it impossible to position human beings in "particular" surroundings, in "time" and "history", and to account for "something as material and concrete as the body" (op.cit.: 173). This, again, makes it impossible, according to von der Fehr, to conceptualize women's situation and oppression adequately (op.cit.: 175). To embrace the disembodied, disembodied subject, to subscribe to a dichotomous thinking that detaches reason and ethics from concrete situations and the experiences of the body, is "to give in to the seduction that defines the whole complex of masculinist discourses at the heart of the Western philosophical tradition" (op.cit.: 176).

There are, in the material I have surveyed, numerous articulations of similar concerns. Feminists need to challenge the picture given in "economic theory and moral/political philosophy" of the individual as "an isolated island" (Ve 1999a: 142). Liberalism misconceives the individual: "The individual is made abstract, is disconnected from his contexts. [...] The bourgeois individual has forgotten that human beings are part of the interpersonal world" (Martinsen 1997: 23); "rights liberalism" lacks an adequate notion of "the self" as "fundamentally socially constituted" (Slagstad 1994: 53, 57).<sup>459</sup> Thus, what is criticized is a notion of the subject which ignores the intersubjective constitution of selves<sup>460</sup> – their embeddedness in symmetrical relations of recognition, but also, in Elstad's terms, their

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<sup>459</sup> Slagstad makes a distinction between "the social-ontological motive" and "the normative motive" in communitarian critiques of liberalism (Alasdair MacIntyre, Michael Sandel, Charles Taylor): The social-ontological motive concerns the "atomistic approach to the self or the subject", the normative motive concerns the notion of "rightness", a standard of moral validity, disconnected from "common values in a substantial sense" (of "procedural principles" as independent from any particular notion of "the good life") (1994: 54). Slagstad subscribes, it seems, to the communitarian social-ontological but not the normative critique: "One can accept that the self is fundamentally sociologically constituted, without thereby saying goodbye to the ability to critical reflect on the sociological context to which one is anyhow attached" (op.cit.: 57). Slagstad refers in this connection to what he considers to be promising feminist intermediate positions in the liberalism-communitarianism debate; Seyla Benhabib and Marilyn Friedman.

<sup>460</sup> See for example Gaarder (1990), Hagemann (1994, 1997), Andenæs (1995, 1992), Andersen (1997), Røthing (2000), Jacobsen and Gressgård (2002).

embeddedness in asymmetrical relations between care-takers and dependents<sup>461</sup> – and their concrete embodiment.<sup>462</sup> This may be read as empirical criticism; the descriptions given of human beings are considered to be misleading.<sup>463</sup> Sometimes, however, it is also framed as a critique from a phenomenological, anthropological or ontological point of view: The thinking of modernity leaves out the constitution of subjects and sexual difference on this more fundamental level, it is argued.<sup>464</sup>

If we return to Lundgren's critique of the modern subject, we see that it also contains critique against the proposed autonomy of the modern subject. Modern autonomy is both impossible and morally suspect. Once more, we are dealing with a very common critique. The argument that autonomy in the modern sense is unachievable, is connected to the critics' notion of what is possible and impossible, given the embedded and embodied character of human beings. The idea is that our embeddedness and embodiment limit our freedom to think and act independently. As summarized by the historian Ingunn Moser:

[...] the modern liberal subject: the independent, autonomous, centered, identical, verbal, authoritative subject [...] has already been deconstructed and exposed: human beings are not masters of their own households – or of their bodies – in this way. He is not in control of shaping either himself or his history (1998: 49).

Individual autonomy is an ideal that cannot be upheld, because it is impossible to achieve. Hence, the normative individualism defended by the moderns is flawed: They claim that something ought to be that cannot be. Moreover, to keep insisting on modern autonomy, “freedom of choice” and detachment as an ideal, when the ideal is in fact unachievable, is, several argue, also irresponsible from a moral point of view: To do so would contribute to “strengthening, rather than weakening oppression and injustice” (Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002: 212). “Individual and group are inevitably interconnected” (op.cit.: 214). “Simply ignoring” the social ontology<sup>465</sup> of groups will not make “the effects” of “group differences” disappear “in everyday life and interaction” (ibid.). It will simply make it more difficult, or

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<sup>461</sup> See for example Martinsen (1990, 1997, 1999), Skjønberg (1996a, 1996b), Schmidt (1998, 1999). The idea that relations between human beings are inevitably asymmetrical is, however, not necessarily linked to explicit care-ethical considerations, see Asdal (1998), Borchgrevink (1999), Jacobsen and Gressgård (2002).

<sup>462</sup> See for example Bjelland (1993), Prieur (1994), Widding Isaksen (1996), Flemmen (1999), Prieur and Moseng (2000), Bolsø (2000), Birkeland (2000), Bleie (2003).

<sup>463</sup> Most of the examples presented so far focus on the process of intersubjective construction of selves. Other contributors focus on the macrostructural embeddedness of subjects (for example Holter 1996, Ellingsæter 1999).

<sup>464</sup> See 5.4.14 for a separate treatment.

<sup>465</sup> To use Slagstad's (1994) term.

even impossible, to conceptualize and criticize, if necessary, these effects, or address them in practice.<sup>466</sup>

However, modern autonomy is considered immoral not only because it is ideological.<sup>467</sup> Were modern autonomy, independence, detachment and freedom of choice in fact achievable, striving to achieve them would still be indefensible, from a moral point of view. This critique of autonomy, and again we talk of a widespread conviction, seems to have several sources:<sup>468</sup> To idealize modern individualism and freedom of choice is, it is argued, to idealize the *homo economicus* of an oppressive capitalist life form (5.4.11, 5.4.15),<sup>469</sup> a positivist epistemology (5.4.5),<sup>470</sup> an impossible and indefensible universalism<sup>471</sup> and an unjustified private-public distinction<sup>472</sup> (5.5.7, 5.5.10), to embrace instrumental rationality, egoism and narcissism (5.4.12),<sup>473</sup> as well as to dismiss norms of solidarity and collectivity (5.4.8),<sup>474</sup> and of political and social equality (5.4.9),<sup>475</sup> even if autonomy and freedom-talk might work successfully as part of strategic moves in certain contexts, and when elaborated in a certain ways (5.4.6).<sup>476</sup> I come back to these criticisms, and deal with them separately.

There are, however, also contributors who question and oppose from different angles the prevalent moral critique of individual autonomy, there exists a counter-discourse. Here I want to point out three concerns emphasized in this counter-discourse. There are, for one thing, contributors who deny that the subject is in fact described by the thinkers of modernity in the way critics claim. The critics consider the modern notion of the subject to be over-abstract: human beings are described as disembodied and disembodied, in accordance with the hegemonic dichotomous schemes of Western culture, putting everything associated with the

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<sup>466</sup> See also Sinding Aasen (1991), Gulli (1992, 1994), Brækhus (1995), Eeg-Henriksen (1998), Borchgrevink (2002), Brandth and Kvande (2003), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

<sup>467</sup> Because, for example, it renders it possible and acceptable to talk about “women’s preferences” for “gender typical choices” in terms of “real preferences”, and thus as outside the scope of legitimate political action, when in fact the realness of these preferences are an “illusion” because of the “social reality” of groups and “patriarchal social structures” (Teigen 2004: 88, 90).

<sup>468</sup> Apart from the arguments already referred to: That the modern autonomous subject is fundamentally different from the feminist agent for change (5.4.1), that the ideal of autonomy is embedded in an inherently patriarchal tradition of thinking (5.4.2), and that it is based on abstractions that are too abstract or abstract in the wrong way (5.4.3, 5.4.4).

<sup>469</sup> Cf. Gaarder (1990), Widerberg (1993), Gullvåg Holter (1997).

<sup>470</sup> Cf. Lie (1990), von der Fehr (1991), Rudberg (1996a, 1996b), Lie (2002).

<sup>471</sup> Cf. Annfelt (1999), Erichsen (2002), Gressgård (2003).

<sup>472</sup> Cf. Hopland Engebretsen (1999), Moi (2000/2001), Lilleaas (2004).

<sup>473</sup> Cf. Skjønsberg (1996a), Martinsen (1997), Ve (1999).

<sup>474</sup> Cf. Nilsen (1992), Mathiesen (2000), Wærness (2001).

<sup>475</sup> Cf. Gulli (1992), Leira (1996), Kvande (1998).

<sup>476</sup> Cf. Melby (1997), Skjeie and Siim (2000), Teigen (2003).



masculine above anything associated with the feminine. Some contributors note, however, that there are figures working from within the modern imaginary who elaborate what human beings are in ways that avoid some or all of these pitfalls, such as Jürgen Habermas<sup>477</sup> and Seyla Benhabib,<sup>478</sup> or even John Rawls.<sup>479</sup>

Second, there are contributors who deny that the modern notion of human beings is indefensible: They rely on modern thought in their reflections on the subject, seemingly undisturbed by what critics claim are unfortunate normative implications of such reliance. Some explicate why they are so undisturbed, whether they, minimally, simply establish as a matter of fact, that the modern idea of the constitution of self is compatible with what critics claim it is not compatible with, or whether they, more ambitiously, develop in more precise terms why this idea does not have the unfortunate normative implications that critics claim it has.<sup>480</sup> The reason could be either that they do not consider the implications often regarded as unfortunate as less unfortunate than assumed, or not unfortunate at all,<sup>481</sup> or that they think the implications are different from what critics claim, and defensible – be it because they regard the critics’ outline of the notion of the subject in the thinking of modernity as misleading,<sup>482</sup> or because they regard the implications drawn from this outline (that may be correct) as misleading.<sup>483</sup> Or, finally, the reason could be that they deny altogether that there are so many

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<sup>477</sup> Cf. L’orange Fürst (1995), Fjørtoft (2002), Stamnes (2002).

<sup>478</sup> Cf. Hagemann (1997), Schmidt (1998), Iversen (1999a).

<sup>479</sup> Hilde Bojer, for example, stresses how a reconstructed version of John Rawls’ liberal theory of justice (i.e. into which elements of Martha Nussbaum and Amartya Sen’s capability approach is integrated) is compatible with approaching individuals as shaped by social structures and cultural patterns. The fact that “women’s position in society is fundamentally related to the division of labour within the family, and to society’s organization of childcare”, that “the gendered division of labour and women’s unpaid work on childcare [...] [are]constraints on economic capability” (2002: 3), “that character traits and preferences that are supposed to be typically feminine or typically masculine are shaped by the gendered society both women and men grow up in” (op.cit: 9), does not, for Bojer, imply that she cannot make Rawls her ally. Rawls says, she quotes: “It has always been recognized that the social system shapes the desires and aspirations of its members; it determines in large part the kind of persons they want to be as well as the kind of persons they are. Thus an economic system is not only an institutional device for satisfying existing wants and desires but a way of fashioning wants and desires in the future” (2002: 9): It is precisely *because* human action is structurally embedded that Rawls focuses on reorganizing the basic structure of society when prescribing conditions for personal liberty. Another example is Edle Bugge Tenden (2002) who connects Rawls’ principles of justice with his notion of human beings whose basic primary good is self-respect.

<sup>480</sup> I will return to this in 5.4.5-5.4.15.

<sup>481</sup> One example is Nina Raaum (1995) who recognizes that liberal feminism’s reliance on a public-private distinction might contradict certain proposals for radical participatory democracy, and is incompatible with anchoring laws and policies in notions of an ethically superior women’s culture. However, these characteristics of liberalism are, in her view, examples of its virtues, not its vices.

<sup>482</sup> As already mentioned.

<sup>483</sup> Consider for example Elin Svenneby’s (1993) embracing assessment of the Enlightenment feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft.

specific normative implications of describing human beings in one way or another.<sup>484</sup> Furthermore, those who make use of, for example, liberal theory in their elaboration of feminism, are more often concerned with which laws and policies are legitimate, than with how the constitution of human beings might be conceptualized adequately, i.e. they read and use liberalism primarily as a normative theory, not as an elaborated social-ontological proposal. In addition, there are contributors who stress the distinction between normative arguments and descriptive elaborations of what human beings are.<sup>485</sup>

Third, several contributors do indeed single out freedom, independence, “autonomy”<sup>486</sup> and “liberation”<sup>487</sup> as included in and even central to the normative horizon of feminism. Some connect this orientation to the modern motif, even if they might be critical of other facets of this motif. One example is Tove Stang Dahl who elaborates the history of women’s law as a struggle for women’s “freedom as a legal good”, inspired by Kant (1994: 157).<sup>488</sup> On the basis of Stang Dahl’s women’s law approach, Jane Elizabeth Wesenberg also emphasizes “freedom”, “liberation” or “emancipation” as key terms in feminism (1995: 27):

A more equal distribution of social and economic rights [...] contributes [...] to more freedom. The right to money and time and a more equal assessment of different kinds of work, are conditions for freedom of action and expression for both women and men. Equal status and equal pay are an important basis for liberation (1995: 27).

Another example is philosopher Elin Svenneby (1999) who explicates “freedom and equal status in a philosophical-historical and gender-political perspective,”<sup>489</sup> working with the notions of freedom developed by Edith Stein, Hannah Arendt and Simone de Beauvoir and in Enlightenment philosophy, as in the works of Mary Wollstonecraft. A third example is Toril Moi who in her introduction to the Norwegian translation of Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* links Beauvoir’s notion of “existential freedom” to the fulfilment of “concrete liberties” as prescribed in the slogan of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment philosophers; freedom, equality and fraternity (2000: xix). Svenneby’s and Moi’s

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<sup>484</sup> This has been one of my concerns (see Holst 2002c).

<sup>485</sup> As pointed out in 5.4.3: Some commentators question, more or less explicitly, whether and how far normative arguments can be corrected by adding empirical context.

<sup>486</sup> Gulli (1992: 16).

<sup>487</sup> Nilsen (1995: 396).

<sup>488</sup> Stang Dahl is critical of liberal gender-neutral jurisprudence, and argues for laws to be conceptualized in a way that takes women’s and men’s different life situation into account (1994: 28). However her account of freedom reflects “a Kantian inspired ethic about the moral duty to recognize all as fellow legislators”, as she puts it in article originally published in 1988 (see Stang Dahl 1994a: 91-105).

<sup>489</sup> To quote the subtitle of her book.

contributions highlight, however, a general tendency: Defenses of individual freedom are often, most often, linked to thinking other than the thinking of modernity. Hege Skjeie and Birte Siim (2000) connect their defense of freedom with a material basis, with the social-democratic citizenship ideal, in opposition to the liberal. Several of the contributions inspired by poststructuralism are also deeply concerned with the conditions for individual liberty. Social anthropologist Turid Markussen sums up “queer” feminism, feminism inspired by Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, as a feminism desiring

[...] greater variety in gender- and sexuality categories and in ways to live together. ‘We have to promote new forms of subjectivity,’ Foucault says, and refers to the need for emancipation not only from the state, but also from the forms of individuality the state encourages (2002: 252).

Finally, there is indeed a certain continuity in the discourse prevalent during the 1970s, on feminism as women’s liberation or emancipation from capitalism and patriarchy. Sociologist Ann Nilsen makes liberation the crucial aim of feminist struggles:

Finally, I want to get back to the concept of liberation, a concept that in many people’s vocabulary has been replaced with more recent and fashionable words and expressions. Is a continual debate on what we ought to be liberated from – and what we ought to be liberated to – imaginable? (1996: 396).

However, this discourse is more often than not thought of as contradictory to the thinking of modernity, not as its continuation.

### **5.4.5 Epistemology and methodology**

Several authors link the modern imaginary to inadequate approaches to epistemology, theory of science and methodology, and develop alternative feminist approaches. An extensive outline of this sort is *Kunnskapens kjønn. Minner, refleksjoner og teori* (1995)<sup>490</sup> by Karin Widerberg, professor in sociology. Inspired by the memory-work method developed by the German feminist sociologist Frigga Haug, Widerberg presents, in the first part of her book, personal memories about gender, sexuality and knowledge. Her conviction is that a feminist approach – to anything – needs to remain connected, even if in subtle and complex ways, to women’s experiences, also Widerberg’s own experiences as a woman. Widerberg

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<sup>490</sup> *The Gender of Knowledge: Memories, Reflections and Theory.*

characterizes her memories of her childhood and adolescent experiences of “reading” as memories of a “room of pleasure”; “body and brain” are “one” (op.cit.: 65). “Reading” is connected with becoming “wiser” through community and intersubjective “understanding”; the feeling of “pleasure” and interconnectedness between body and brain can be “shared” and “strengthened” through this sharing (ibid.). The sharing is gendered: Reading, understanding, becoming wiser and “the intimacy based upon” these practices, happen in “a room of women” (op.cit.: 65-66). In contrast to this room of female intimacy, collectivity, desire, wisdom and understanding, there is in Widerberg’s memories of childhood and adolescence “a room of knowledge” closely connected to her “classroom” experiences (op.cit.: 66). In the room of knowledge to succeed is “an individual and lonely project”, what matters is to distinguish oneself from the crowd, not to share and understand one another (ibid.). Moreover, in the room of knowledge there is no place for the female body. To enter this room as a woman is to “choose” to be “brain”, “to leave the body behind” (op.cit.: 67). The room of knowledge is a patriarchal, heterosexualized room where women are not granted the privilege of having equal intellectual authority and a concrete, sexual body at the same time.

The division between the two rooms, “brain and body, knowledge and sexuality” within an overall framework of “women’s oppression”, still haunt her, she says, as a grown-up academic woman (op.cit.: 112). Because even if Widerberg has chosen to be brain, in becoming a sociology professor, she has never accepted the price, that is to leave her body behind. Also, even if she had accepted it, the division would still inevitably haunt her. At the university, where female bodies are not cared for, women “expect” to be “treated as brains” only (op.cit.: 111-112). “We know”, however that

[...] men just like women cannot totally exclude what they see and how things are outside the university walls. I know that at the university a man can, from one moment to the next, think about me or treat me as a body. [And] what I experience outside the university setting reminds me continually of this; that I am, in the end, woman = body (op.cit.: 112).

Widerberg’s adult memories feed this knowledge: She experiences the contradiction of being female and intellect at the same time. However, her adult memories are also memories of non-acceptance of this division, of feminist struggle and optimism. Inspired by “feminist theory and politics” women have developed “a room of women” within “the room of knowledge”, materialized in the development of feminist studies at universities, “women’s organizations, female networks and so on” (op.cit.: 109, 110). This room of women has, Widerberg says,

[...] much in common with the room of women I had during childhood and adolescence. Here we were once again friends that chatted about what concerned us, based on intimacy. To share and give and understand were a common project. It was like coming home, to a place where body and brain were one. And this also shed light on the room of knowledge that I had entered, a room that I had perceived to a certain extent as a room of understanding. Not only were men in focus in this room, but also the ways of understanding reached were male and identical with those [ways of understanding] that had dominated the class rooms of childhood and adolescence (competition and individualism) (op.cit.: 110).

The latter part of *Kunnskapens kjønn* is a discussion of how this “room of women”, the “feminist academic project”, can progress (op.cit.: 17): Widerberg wants a female enclave within the “room of knowledge” that is fundamentally hostile to it, in order to change the room of knowledge itself (op.cit.: 113). Recent developments in feminist theory might facilitate this project, by highlighting and clarifying how women can start “producing knowledge on their own terms”, being “body” and “brain” at the same time (op.cit.: 117). This requires inquiry guided by “principles of intimacy” not “principles of distance”; feminist scientific investigation should remain close to women and their everyday experiences (op.cit.: 118).<sup>491</sup> Because, Widerberg argues, women are in fact positioned to share certain experiences of oppression. We can talk about a common “female subjectivity” (op.cit.: 147):

1. The relations of work in developed capitalist societies “position women in concrete work that they mediate into abstract work” (op.cit.: 149). “Most women” in “our society” have experiences with work of this sort, in the labor market, or “at least as mothers or heterosexual partners” (ibid.). These are experiences of intimacy, with others and with the material. They influence what women “want and wish for [...] [them]selves, others and society”, how and for what they are “struggling”, and the scope of their “solidarity”: Whereas male workers typically care for themselves and each other, female workers care also for the dependent, those who rely on them as care workers (op.cit.: 150). Moreover, in their concrete work women meet other women. This is another way of experiencing intimacy among women.

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<sup>491</sup> Roughly speaking, Widerberg says, there are two understandings of the notion of experience. Either experience is thought of as something corresponding to “reality (sense impressions etc.)”, this is the “positivist” notion, or it is equated with our “interpretation” of it; with what it “means” to us (as “text”), or one tries to synthesize the two understandings by means of a “dialectical maneuver” of one kind or another (1995: 119). Widerberg aims for the latter, relying on the somewhat different mediating maneuvers of Frigga Haug, Dorothy E. Smith, Ann Game and Joan Scott.

2. Women are socialized to be subordinate. The female body is put under stricter social control than the male body, Widerberg argues. This peculiar “normalization” of women’s bodies causes women’s subordination to become “internalized” (op.cit.: 151). Women are not only oppressed by others, they also participate actively in their own oppression, since the role of being subordinate is internalized into a part of their selves.

3. Women are sexually vulnerable. This is “an experience women in many cultures are positioned to share”; “the female subject is constituted by this” sexual “asymmetrical” vulnerability (op.cit.: 152). Sexual violence is an extreme expression of this vulnerability. Other expressions are fear of violence, and the persuasive repression and normalization of female sexuality.

4. Women are physically vulnerable. Men are physically stronger than women – this gives women an experience of a peculiar physical vulnerability.<sup>492</sup>

5. Women are psychologically vulnerable, as a result of their sexual and physical vulnerability, but also because they give birth; “the vulnerability [...] of having children is an experience women in our culture are positioned to share” (op.cit.: 157).

Even if these five points all refer to experiences of oppression, they are at the same time experiences that might give women “power and strength to [...] struggle for change and emancipation” (ibid.). Women’s vulnerability and their experiences with concrete work and its mediation, might enable them to be emotionally equipped for intimacy, make them more open to others, and thus endow them with “strength” and “well-being”, Widerberg notes (op.cit.: 158). Moreover, women’s experiences of being close to other women might give

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<sup>492</sup> Widerberg refers in this connection to the sociology of Georg Simmel. He connects women’s physical vulnerability, and their fear of being abused economically and personally as an implication of this, to women’s conservatism; their defense of traditional conventions. More than formal law such conventions of decency and respectability protect the weaker part by holding back “the pure natural relation” (1995: 153). Simmel wrote about this in 1908, in “Der Streit” in *Soziologie*. Is his analysis still relevant today? Cultural conventions might still have more to say than formal juridical norms, Widerberg says. However, contemporary conventions are less protective of women. On the one hand, “family life, school, sport and the military position men as physically strong and women as physically weak”; “the institutions of society” contribute towards making “the natural difference” far more “natural” than it is (op.cit.: 155). On the other hand, the protective conventions are erased by “the ideology of gender equality”: It is no longer politically correct to subscribe to the idea that men, because of their superior physical strength, should protect women. Thus, egalitarian “ideology” combined with the retreat of the traditional ethos about what is decent and respectable, might in fact make contemporary women more physically vulnerable than Simmel’s female contemporaries (ibid.). See also 5.4.8.

them “pleasure, power and strength – despite their oppression. Memories of intimacy are part of our bodies, we know how it can be, and this makes us [...] try to make things so” (ibid.).

In addition to the dimensions of female subjectivity listed above, there is, moreover, a meta-dimension, she says, that “cuts through”, “interacts with” and “neutralizes” the other five (ibid.):

[...] not [...] to feel at home in one’s position (Woman) or in the alternative (Man), but instead search for and want to be ‘another’ other or another in ‘another’ way, I think is what most characterizes [...] female subjectivity in a society committed to the idea of gender equality (ibid.).

It is the five dimensions and this meta-dimension of female subjectivity which together constitute a basis for female “solidarity” (op.cit.: 159),<sup>493</sup> and which, according to Widerberg, should have an impact on how feminists conceptualize “objectivity” (op.cit.: 160). “Traditionally” objectivity has been linked to a “positivist” approach to knowledge production (ibid.). This approach has “distance” as one of its aims; from the topics, from the research “objects” (as they are not considered to be “subjects”) and in the analysis (ibid.). “Intersubjectivity and reliability” are other aims: The researcher should try not to “influence” the research process and the outcome of it, so that other researchers would come to similar conclusions (ibid.). Furthermore, the approach is characterized by a lack of interest in the research subjects’ subjectivity: One is interested in what they actually do, not in what they say they do, and different techniques are thus used to control the “validity” of their answers, in order to find out “how things really are” (ibid.). The ideal is “the natural sciences”; the difference between producing knowledge about things and knowledge about human beings is not addressed critically.<sup>494</sup> Objectivity from “a feminist perspective” looks different, Widerberg argues (op.cit.: 162.). She elaborates four suggestions, which in her opinion are faithful to women’s experiences and the feminist aims of solidarity and emancipation, and which look forward to a different scientific practice based on the interconnectedness of “body” and “brain” and on “principles of intimacy”:

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<sup>493</sup> Widerberg stresses, however, that we need to be aware of changes in the basis of this solidarity, as well as generational and class differences in the development of female subjectivity, in order to avoid “static analyses” and “essentialism”: “Solidarity that has different experiences and differences in the same experiences as a point of departure, is the only fruitful strategy if we are to build and use female subjectivity in a society where women live different lives” (1995: 159).

<sup>494</sup> This was addressed, Widerberg notes, on a meta-theoretical level by the critics of positivism during the 1960s and 1970s. Contemporary postmodernists are addressing it even more radically. Both groups of critics have, however, been reluctant to spell out the implications of their critique for research practice, in her opinion.

1. *Embodied objectivity* is a notion developed by Donna Haraway, and by this Haraway means “quite simply situated knowledges” (ibid.). Objectivity does not refer to “the false vision of limitless transcendence” (ibid.). All perspectives are “partial”, “specific” and “embodied”: To be objective is to recognize and address the situatedness of one’s knowledge claims, and to take “responsibility” for the consequences of one’s claims (ibid.). Haraway talks about this as a perspective “from below” (ibid.). However, this does not mean that subordinate positions do not also need to be critically examined. There are no “innocent” positions (ibid.). Rather, positions from below are preferable because “they are least likely to allow a denial of the critical and interpretative” aspect of all knowledge (ibid.). According to Widerberg, this does not lead to relativism. Haraway stresses that “partial, [...] critical knowledge claims are embedded in networks based on political solidarity and common epistemological conversations” (op.cit.: 163). This is, Widerberg concludes, a prescription for intimacy modified by “critical methods and interpretation” in a collective (ibid.).

2. The collective aspect of knowledge production is further elaborated by Helen Longino:<sup>495</sup> She talks about *collective objectivity* as a standard of valid knowledge. Longino’s point of departure is a criticism of feminists who equate rationality and masculinity; this is “to grant rationality to men”, and to rob women of a “human quality” (ibid.). Rather than dismiss concepts of rationality and objectivity, feminists should reconstruct them. Scientific knowledge is produced in an interactive collective, not by isolated individuals. Scientists modify each others’ “observations, theories, ways of reasoning etc.” Objectivity depends on a “social context” (ibid.) Accordingly, what is more or less objective is “the community of inquirers, not the individual inquirer” (ibid.), Widerberg notes. To produce objective knowledge, a community must fulfill at least four requirements, Longino argues: There must be common standards of criticism, commonly accepted ways of living up to these standards, real critical dialogue, as well as “equal distribution of intellectual authority among qualified practitioners” (op.cit.: 164). However, “emotions” also play a crucial role in knowledge production. (op.cit.: 165). Emotions are the foundation of understanding. The point is that they are not reliable as the only basis for action, as they too are “one-sided” (ibid.). This is why critical dialogue is so crucial. We do not have to choose between “autonomy” and “attachment”, we can opt for “intersubjectivity”, understood not as a “gender neutral term”

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<sup>495</sup> Widerberg refers to the article “Feminist Critiques of Rationality: Critiques of Science or Philosophy of Science?”.



Widerberg notes, but as dialogic “interaction” between “individuals and groups” with differently “positioned knowledge claims” (ibid.). In this way, Longino and Haraway reach a similar conclusion, emphasizing “intimacy” in knowledge production, and the role of the collective in guaranteeing pluralism in criticism (ibid.).

3. Moreover, Longino emphasizes that objectivity does not only concern “the level of justification”, but also “the level of discovery”: Scientific inquiry should give “a representative picture of the questions that may be asked” (op.cit.: 162). In Sandra Harding’s<sup>496</sup> terms, objectivity should be *strong*. Knowledge might well be confirmed, but it is not objective if only certain questions are asked, and not all the questions that are relevant. To fulfill this requirement, “different groups and positions must be represented in the community of inquirers” (op.cit.: 164). Also, “we” (women) must insist on being “outsiders-within”, never become complete insiders, and consider “differences as a creative resource in scientific knowledge production” (ibid.).

4. Finally, there is Evelyn Fox Keller’s<sup>497</sup> notion of *dynamic objectivity*. Static objectivity is the traditional positivist objectivity based on the subject-object separation; this separation is considered the basis of objectivity. This notion of objectivity corresponds, Fox Keller says, to “male subjectivity”, drawing on psychological object relations theory as developed by Nancy Chodorow (op.cit.: 166). This theory considers our individuation as an outcome of the separation from the mother, a separation that is more “dramatic” for boys since they cannot be like her, and thus, must “break the ties” more “drastically” (ibid.). Fox Keller’s alternative is an objectivity that would correspond more closely to girls’ psychological development. Girls are going to be “like their mothers”, and so do not have to “break the ties” as boys are “forced” to do (ibid.). Hence, female subjectivity is more influenced by the intimacy and connectedness upon which a dynamic objectivity needs to be based. To aim for dynamic objectivity is to aim for “maximal authenticity” in “the understanding of the world”, to recognize “the integrity” of our environment and how we are connected to it, and to consider “subjective experience” as a foundation for knowledge” (op.cit.: 166-167), Widerberg concludes.

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<sup>496</sup> Widerberg refers to *The Science Question in Feminism and Whose Science? Whose Knowledge?*.

<sup>497</sup> Widerberg refers to *Reflections on Gender and Science*.

There are many elements in Widerberg's project worth considering more closely.<sup>498</sup> Several of her crucial claims are also stated somewhat ambiguously.<sup>499</sup> Here, I want to focus on her overall proposal; that a feminist commitment has particular implications on the levels of epistemology, philosophy of science and methodology, implications that amount to a critique of the prescriptions laid down by the thinking of modernity. There is a general tendency in the material I have surveyed either to connect this thinking to a defense of "value-freedom"<sup>500</sup> and "positivism",<sup>501</sup> defined more or less as Widerberg defines them, or, more commonly, to treat the debate on value-freedom and positivism as it was conducted prior to feminist interventions, as a debate going on within the parameters of this thinking.<sup>502</sup> Either way, feminism is linked to epistemological doctrines and methodological approaches different from those defended by the thinkers of modernity, whether these (feminist) doctrines and approaches are positioned as particular versions of the critique of positivism, or as transcending the whole debate on positivism. Widerberg outlines feminist epistemology as a sophisticated version of standpoint epistemology: Knowledge-production must not lose touch with women's experiences and female subjectivity and the peculiar cognitive resources this subjectivity provides, even if the ultimate aim is objectivity – embodied, collective, strong, dynamic – reached through critical, democratic dialogue between situated knowers.

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<sup>498</sup> I will return to several of them. Whether women have common experiences, i.e. whether and how we can in fact talk of female subjectivity in the way Widerberg does, is discussed for example in 5.4.8 and 5.4.14. How to conceptualize the relationship between reason and sentiments when making judgments is discussed in 5.4.12; how to consider the relationship between the individual and the collective is discussed in 5.4.8; and the discussion on how to consider the relationship between private memories and perspectives and public concerns is elaborated in 5.4.10. The critique of the modern autonomous subject has already been elaborated (5.4.4).

<sup>499</sup> Her main sources of inspiration, Frigga Haug, Dorothy Smith, Ann Game, Joan Scott, Sandra Harding, Donna Haraway, Evelyn Fox Keller and Helen Longino defend different positions in epistemological debates, as highlighted by Widerberg herself. A reasonable reading of *Kunnskapens kjønn*, in my opinion, would be to emphasize Widerberg's reliance on Haug, Smith and Harding, and thus to read her position as a version of a feminist standpoint epistemology (see Chapter 4). This is reasonable considering the overall argument of the book, Widerberg's other contributions (for example Widerberg 1992, 1993, 2000a, 2003), and other commentators' interpretation of her (for example Rudberg 1996a, 1996b, Davidsen, Solli and Waaler 1996, Hopland Engebretsen 1999).

<sup>500</sup> For example, Asdal (1998: 149).

<sup>501</sup> See for example Mortensen (1994), Egeland (2001).

<sup>502</sup> The latter is Widerberg's position (1995: 161). She recognizes that the critique of positivism in the 1960s and 1970s – highly influenced in Norway by the works of Habermas – provided crucial "meta-theoretical" elements to the development of feminist epistemology (ibid.). The challenge now, she argues, is to develop these elements, make them relevant for feminist projects, and establish more concrete "criteria for research practice" (op.cit.: 161). Ann Therese Lotherington and Turid Markussen argue along similar lines: "Feminist theory of science" differs from "hermeneutic understandings of science", they argue, referring to Donna Haraway, because it is more "political" (1999: 21). Hermeneutics does not address "power and hierarchy" in the relationship between "subject and object" in the production of knowledge; "the ethical dimension" is lost (op.cit.: 21-22). Kristin Asdal makes a parallel point. The critics of positivism recognized (her example is Hans Skjervheim), she says, that human beings are not "merely objects, but also fellow subjects" (1998: 149). However, "nature" also does not consist of "merely objects": "What we have defined as nature" is very often "someone", "inappropriate or peculiar kinds of others", who have, however, not been granted status as subjects in scientific representations" (op.cit.: 150).

There are several other proposals that rely in one way or another on standpoint arguments.<sup>503</sup> However, as in the case of Widerberg, such proposals are seldom based on standpoint theory exclusively. When discussing the epistemological basis of feminist archeology, Ericka Engelstad ends up with “an ambiguous position which sees the importance of all three epistemologies: empiricism, standpoint and postmodern” (1991: 504).<sup>504</sup> Feminist empiricists argue that “scientists have practiced science in an inadequate way”; to “produce better, more objective science” uncontaminated by patriarchal “bias”, one needs simply to “adhere” more strictly to the established “methodology of science” (ibid.). Feminist standpoint theorists argue that “the feminist perspective or ‘standpoint’ is a morally and scientifically preferable grounding for our interpretations and explanations of natural and social life” (ibid.). Feminist postmodernists argue that “knowledge is historically contingent, that there is no single, ultimate truth” (ibid.). Like the empiricists, Engelstad emphasizes the value of established scientific methodology and the role of “empirical constraints” in inquiry; “empirical ‘reality’” provides a “limit to the possibility of limitless interpretations” (op.cit.: 508). Like the standpoint theorists, Engelstad stresses the moral and scientific value of seeking knowledge from women’s perspective, even if she distances herself from considering women to be cognitively privileged in any general decisive sense, and from “essentialist”, “universal” approaches to “Woman” (op.cit.: 504). And when seeking insight from the postmodernists, Engelstad turns to Haraway, who in her view avoids the relativism<sup>505</sup> haunting other postmodern proposals:

Another feminist postmodern theorist, D. Haraway, would ‘argue for a doctrine and practice of objectivity that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, webbed connections, and hope for transforming systems of knowledge and ways of seeing’. Further refining this position she [Haraway] advocates, ‘positioned knowledges’: ‘politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims’. This partial, positioned knowledge, shows objectivity as ‘positioned rationality’, and cannot escape accountability and responsibility (op.cit.: 504-505).

In contributions that rely more exclusively on a ‘postmodern, ‘poststructuralist’ or ‘posthumanist’ perspective, the dismissal of relativism is often very explicit: Going post- in

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<sup>503</sup> Cf. Lie (1990), Engelstad (1991), Barth (1996), Rustad (1996), Rudberg (1996a, 1996b), Bratteteig and Verne (1997), Gulbrandsen (1998), Gerrard and Valestrand (1999a, 1999b), Lie (2002).

<sup>504</sup> She refers here to Sandra Harding’s classification of feminist epistemologies.

<sup>505</sup> In her critique of relativism, Engelstad relies, among others, on the archeologist and feminist philosopher of science Alison Wylie, and on Richard Bernstein’s *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis*.

one's approach to science is not to accept moral or epistemological relativism.<sup>506</sup> Historian Kristin Asdal points out that Haraway's idea is not to position the "units" studied in science as "discursive constructions" considered as "ideological" constructions (1998: 158). Haraway's idea is, rather, that discursive constructions are "real constructions", and that what constructs and what is being constructed in "scientific discourse" are both humans and non-humans (ibid.). This approach paves the way for "a friendlier and more solidaric knowledge" (op.cit.: 162).

It is also typical that Asdal does not make a point of targeting feminist standpoint approaches in epistemology, even if she does not herself rely on them. Generally speaking, contributors who criticize the epistemology associated with the modern imaginary from whatever feminist perspective, seem to share many of the concerns elaborated in Widerberg's *Kunnskapens kjønn*: namely, that all knowledge is relative to its social and historical context; that patriarchal structures and norms have been and still are a crucial part of the context in which knowledge is produced; that human sentiments and bodily desires play and should play a crucial role in knowledge production; that intimacy with, feelings of solidarity and relatedness to that which one is studying, in whatever scientific discipline, is just as important as critical distance; that knowledge is produced in communities not by isolated individuals; that better knowledge is produced in democratic not in hierarchical communities; and that all this goes not only for the production of scientific and other kinds of expert knowledge, but also for the production of everyday knowledge.<sup>507</sup> The differences between the various critical proposals are more often those of emphasis than of argument. Some emphasize their reliance on postmodern approaches,<sup>508</sup> others tone down this reliance and highlight their second thoughts about it.<sup>509</sup> Some find it urgent to address the charge of essentialism in talk of women's experiences and the connection between such experiences and knowledge production, while others consider the charge of essentialism to be essentially misunderstood.<sup>510</sup> And some are more afraid than others of being charged with relativism: Some emphasize and elaborate more

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<sup>506</sup> Usually this anti-relativism is assumed to be something that the feminist critique of science has in common with the thinking of modernity. The exceptions are certain contributions where "liberal" epistemology is considered to be a "relativist" position (Rustad 1999: 94).

<sup>507</sup> This is one reason why many contributors use terms such as 'epistemology', 'theory of knowledge', 'theory of science' and 'philosophy of science' interchangeably.

<sup>508</sup> Cf. Gulbrandsen (1995), Lotherington and Markussen (1999), Annfelt (2002).

<sup>509</sup> Like Widerberg and Engelstad.

<sup>510</sup> Many find it more urgent than Widerberg, and are reluctant to talk about common facets of women's experiences and female subjectivity.

than others their reliance on a notion of objectivity and their commitment to feminism and, to a lesser or greater degree,<sup>511</sup> to other egalitarian commitments.

In *Kunnskapens kjønn*, the feminist critique of science and epistemology is also linked to methodological questions, and to the more concrete question of how to go about doing science: Widerberg wants ‘principles of intimacy’ to influence our thinking on what knowledge is, our thinking on how we go about seeking knowledge – but also on our concrete research practices. Several of the critical epistemological proposals make similar connections between principles of inquiry and concrete prescriptions. It is one of the problems with mainstream epistemology, they argue, that it turns epistemology into an activity in the abstract. In addition there are contributions that focus more strictly on methodological issues.<sup>512</sup>

What methods and what application of these methods are adequate, given the feminist critique of science? This is a question of how we should go about things, if we are to acquire knowledge about the world. It is, however, also a question of morality and ethics. A fundamental assumption in contributions critical of modern epistemology, is that the conditions of objectivity – of a stronger, embodied, collective, more dynamic objectivity – are perceived as being inevitably intertwined with conditions of emancipation.<sup>513</sup> This interconnection should, it is argued, be reflected also on the more concrete level of method. It is in this context that Widerberg introduces memory-work as a valuable method in feminist sociology. Another example is sociologist Ann Nilsen’s outline of “retrospective life course interviews” as a feminist method, inspired by among others Ann Oakley<sup>514</sup> and Dorothy Smith (1992: 22). This is a “research procedure” that makes it possible to avoid making a “sharp distinction between subject” – the researcher – and “object” – upon who research is done – but regards them instead as fellow subjects, Nilsen argues (op.cit.: 24). The aim is that “both parties can gain the insight and knowledge necessary to reveal how the ‘relations of ruling’ affect our everyday lives” (ibid.).<sup>515</sup> The presupposition of this endeavor is, however, “an attitude of solidarity” which “implies a combination of care in a wider sense and respect

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<sup>511</sup> Some talk extensively about the connection between feminism and the struggle against all kinds of oppression. Others’ focus is more exclusively on gender and the oppression of women.

<sup>512</sup> Cf. Nilsen (1992, 1996), Syltevik (1993, 2000), Thagaard (1996), Christensen (1997, 2000), Sørensen (1999), Haavind (2000a, 2000b), Sørensen and Grimsmo (2001), Lilleaas (2004).

<sup>513</sup> To use Widerberg’s terms.

<sup>514</sup> Oakley’s article “Interviewing Women: A Contradiction in Terms”, is the point of departure for Nilsen’s reflections.

<sup>515</sup> Smith’s term (i.e. ‘relations of ruling’).

for the person interviewed”; care in combination with “creating a space for the knower” (op.cit.: 25)

There is a counter-discourse – though not a very explicit one – which targets the dominant notion of a relationship, of the kind elaborated here, between feminism, epistemology and methodology. One topic of debate is how the contributors who intervene in epistemological debates conceptualize feminism as a normative project.<sup>516</sup> Other topics of debate include how far and in what sense a feminist commitment should be related to change in epistemological principles and scientific methodology. Even in some of the contributions mentioned above as being critical towards conventional approaches in science, there are contradictory signals. Consider for example Ericka Engelstad, who clearly “sees the importance of” the “successor science” approach of “feminist empiricism”, even if she tries to synthesize this approach with more science-critical feminist approaches (1991: 504). Most contributions seem, moreover, to trust, on many occasions, data that is the outcome of investigations made in accordance with conventional scientific methodology and theories of knowledge.<sup>517</sup> A few argue also explicitly against feminist standpoint epistemology as well as postmodern proposals. Social anthropologist Tone Bleie elaborates in detail such an argument, criticizing both Haraway and the standpoint theorists, and concludes:

I am myself to a large extent in agreement with Nussbaum and Kay<sup>518</sup> in that asserting the fundamental positionality and relativization of different knowledge regimes is rather destructive for feminist inquiry’s ability to establish an adequate understanding of human development, and ghetto-izes gender research in a culture-deterministic position, which is not considered adequate from a scientific point of view outside our own institutions and meeting points (2003a: 34-35).<sup>519</sup>

Another example is an article by philosopher Mathias Kaiser (1990), in which he argues that feminist scientific critique, such as that developed by Sandra Harding, implies in effect that one is embracing relativism:

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<sup>516</sup> Consider again the detailed critique of Widerberg’s proposal in Davidsen, Solli and Waaler (1996). Consider also the contributions dismissing the postmodern feminism, upon which much of the meta-critique of science is more or less reliant (for example Wærness 1995, Sümer 1998, Solheim 1998, 1999, Ve 1999a, Moi 1999).

<sup>517</sup> This is, however, not necessarily highlighted. Consider, for example, how Elisabeth Gulbrandsen (1998) subscribes, on the one hand, to the postmodern critique of science as elaborated by Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti, yet on the other rests her argument on the empirical works of Hege Skjeie based on conventional scientific methodology.

<sup>518</sup> She refers to Martha Nussbaum’s *Women and Human Development. The Capabilities Approach* and to Judith Kays’ article “Politics Without Human Nature?”.

<sup>519</sup> Bleie links her defense of established scientific epistemology and methodology to a defense of recent “neo-Darwinian biology and research on cognition” (2003a: 44).

Now, if one's opinion is that scientific points of view are systematically biased towards a gender specific perspectivism, then the ideal of objectivity is seemingly threatened. [...] The answer must then be *relativism*: knowledge, criteria of objectivity, progress, scientific method, truth etc. are *relative* to social definitions, conceptual schemes, historical epochs etc., or precisely, gender. Relativism has however (at least) one decisive weakness that makes it not very attractive for feminist philosophy of science: it is *useless as a philosophy for emancipation*. If we accept that empirical reality is a matter of fact in that it can be described as the oppression of one (powerless) group to the advantage of another (power) group, relativism has no support to give the powerless position other than the insight that the position which characterizes the identity of, and is put forward by, the power group cannot have universal validity. However, relativism cannot say that the power groups are wrong and lack legitimacy. [...] To the extent that feminist theory will attach itself to women's political struggles and thereby unite theory with action, relativism is [...] an impossible option. It cannot be the (whole) point that men tend towards one kind of knowledge and women towards another. It must also (still) be possible to say that one kind of knowledge is better or more truth-like than another. If this objectivist element is not taken care of – in one way or another – one loses the legitimacy to take the power position away from the oppressor (original emphasis, 1990: 223-224).

Some contributors express similar concerns, even if their argument is less elaborated than in Bleie's and Kaiser's articles, where a critical assessment of feminist critique of epistemology is the main objective.<sup>520</sup> Additionally, there are contributors who, relatively independent of the wider epistemological debate, emphasize the value of quantitative methods and statistical data, in face of what they consider to be a prevalent view: that feminists should prefer a qualitative approach.<sup>521</sup>

Finally, there is the question as to whether some or even most of, for example, Widerberg's demands to feminist epistemology and methodology are compatible with, or even developed interestingly within the framework of the project of modernity. The notion of objectivity as sketched by Widerberg in *Kunnskapens kjønn* is inspired by, among others, Helen Longino's epistemological reflections,<sup>522</sup> even if other sources of inspiration clearly play the decisive role in her proposal. Engelstad's reference to Richard Bernstein may be read as a concession

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<sup>520</sup> Cf. Raaum and Skogerbø (1993), Serck-Hanssen (2000/2001), Blom (2003).

<sup>521</sup> Cf. Dale (1992), Wærness (1995), Sørensen (1999), Skjeie and Teigen (2003). There are also other variants of the debate on methods. Bjørg Aase Sørensen (1999) and Hildur Ve (1992a) recommend and pursue what they refer to as "action research", where the researcher aims to both do research and act on the basis of that research. The researcher might, for example, aim to do research on the everyday problems of workers in an enterprise and at the same time intervene and try to solve their problems, together with the workers and those in charge of the enterprise. Annick Prieur (1992) argues that the tradition of action research in Norwegian sociology, to which feminist sociologists have contributed, might end up as "uncritical" research, because the researcher needs to cooperate with those in power (for example, those in charge of the enterprise where workers have different everyday problems), and thus, that a less intervening science, even if presumed to be less political, might nevertheless be more critical.

<sup>522</sup> Longino's proposal for a feminist epistemology is inspired by, among others, the works of Charles Sanders Peirce and Jürgen Habermas, see Chapters 2 and 3.

to the thinking of modernity (1991: 505).<sup>523</sup> Several feminist critics of modern epistemology highlight, moreover, a degree of continuity from the critique of positivist science, as this was developed by defenders of the modern imaginary, to their own projects, even if they maintain that there are differences, of a more or less fundamental nature. And, in some cases, these differences are introduced as only minor corrections to the modern critique of positivism. One example is Gro Hagemann's attempt to articulate an intermediate position between positivism, on the one hand, and, on the other, radical prescriptions for a science based on a specific "female rationality" of "sentiments", different from the reason and science of men (2003: 201, 202).<sup>524</sup> Another example is philosopher May Thorseth's contribution. Her ambition is to highlight the value of "the ideal of argumentative rationality" as developed by Jürgen Habermas and Karl Otto Apel, and Longino's very similar idea of a reasonable "interactive dialogic community" (1994: 20). Thorseth asks why Longino labels her epistemological proposal feminist:

As Longino argues, subjectivity is conditioned by social and historical location *and* our cognitive efforts have an affective dimension. According to Longino, scientific knowledge concerns language and rationality. This is constructed by individuals in interaction with each other in ways that modify their observations, theories, hypotheses and patterns of reasoning. Longino takes this to be a *feminist insight*, because it is the outcome of a dialogue not constructed by individuals, but by an *interactive dialogic community*. However, as far as I can see, this is the ideal of *argumentative rationality*: Free, open discussion, no coercion upon arguments set forth. The generality of argumentative rationality is also reflexivity: All arguments, my own included, might be turned against me. So far, I cannot see how a valid argument can be made that this kind of rationality is a feminist insight (original emphasis, *ibid.*).

Thorseth nevertheless ends up questioning the modern ideal of "universal consensus": "Longino points to certain problems concerning pluralism and consensus, and she does not believe in a universal consensus. To the extent that I reject the rhetoric of conformism, I agree with Longino.<sup>525</sup> [...] the conformist civilizing project, [...] seems to presuppose an abstract and value-neutral rationality"<sup>526</sup> (op.cit.: 21).

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<sup>523</sup> In *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, Bernstein argues for an approach to reason and science inspired by among others, Jürgen Habermas and Hannah Arendt.

<sup>524</sup> This is, Hagemann argues, the most "drastic" interpretation of Hanne Haavind's proposal for a feminist epistemology (2003: 202).

<sup>525</sup> Thorseth is, however, somewhat "unsure" of her position (1994: 21): She "would like to work [it] out in further detail" (*ibid.*).

<sup>526</sup> Despite Apel's and Habermas' ambitions to achieve the opposite.



### 5.4.6 Feminist strategies

In an article on “the affirmative action controversy”, social scientist Mari Teigen argues for a new set of “discursive strategies” when making a case for affirmative action (2000: 63, 72); for “differential treatment procedures to achieve a more balanced composition of individuals according to group characteristics” (ibid.). Her case is affirmative action for women. One strategy relies on Ronald Dworkin’s interpretation of liberalism. It is one’s right, according to Dworkin, to be treated as an equal, with the same respect and concern as anyone else (“a principle of individualism”), not equality of treatment (“a principle of equal treatment”), that is “fundamental” for the liberal position, he says (op.cit.: 68, 72). This move “contributes to detach the tight (and tacit) connection between justice and merit selection”, and “paves the way”, Teigen argues, “for gender equality objectives to come in and influence the formulation of selection criteria” (op.cit.: 72).<sup>527</sup> Traditionally, liberals, such as Jon Elster (op.cit.: 66-67),<sup>528</sup> have argued that affirmative action policies are incompatible with liberal principles. Dworkin’s position thus represents “a particular challenge” to the opposition to affirmative action as it is so “distinctly placed within the liberal theory tradition” (op.cit.: 73).

A second discursive strategy, according to Teigen, are “the gender difference arguments”; the “resource argument” – “that men and women should be more evenly distributed in decision-making positions, so that gender-based differences can be utilized to the benefit of society”, and the “interest representation argument – “that the interests of men and women are contradictory, thus the continuation of male dominance implies a repression of the needs of women” (op.cit.: 69, 73):

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<sup>527</sup> “An individual right to equality must be understood in terms of two different sorts of rights, or equality principles [Dworkin argues]. First, there is a principle of equal treatment, reserved for some basic rights, i.e. the right to free speech and the right to an equal vote. Second, there is the general right of every individual to be treated as an equal, which implies the right to be treated with the same respect and concern as anyone else. The right to be treated as an equal should not, however, preclude institutions from selecting candidates according to the legitimate goals of that institution, Dworkin argues. Dworkin presents a defence of affirmative action in education [...]. Affirmative action is a necessary tool for universities to fulfill their public responsibility, Dworkin argues. Higher education institutions have a commitment towards the wider community, if for no other reason than that they are publicly financed. Besides, student enrolment purely based on merit selection puts too much emphasis on backward-looking achievements and too little on forward-looking promise, he maintains. The assumption of a direct correlation between merit achievements and future contributions is poorly documented, Dworkin claims. Universities should choose a student body that, as a whole, will make the greatest future contribution to the legitimate goals their institutions have defined” (Teigen 2000: 68).

<sup>528</sup> “A theoretical approach to the resistance to affirmative action is provided by Jon Elster (the liberal objection). He stresses the primacy of two principles – one of ‘ethical individualism’, the other of ‘ethical presentism’. [...] According to the first [...], all persons should be judged individually and not on the basis of characteristics of the group to which the person belongs (groups do not count). [...] Ethical presentism means that practices from previous times should be of no relevance for the distribution of goods today (the past does not count). On this basis [...] Elster establishes a direct opposition between affirmative action and a liberal point of view” (Teigen 2000: 66-67).

These approaches replace an emphasis on discrimination with an argumentation saying that women are not only equally qualified with men according to standard criteria, but that more women in male-dominated areas will contribute to new perspectives and ways of solving problems, and in this way everybody wins. The idea is that the support for affirmative action is dependent upon a shift in perspective, from an emphasis on measures to counteract prejudice against women to a stressing of the institutional advantages of including women (op.cit.: 73).

The difference argument has had a “particularly strong position” in Norwegian debates, Teigen notes (op.cit.: 74). The argument has been criticized for putting too much emphasis on gender relative to other differentiating principles. However, she maintains, referring to Anne Phillips,<sup>529</sup> “even though individual women’s interests vary, interests may well be gendered; [...] women, probably more adequately than men, will represent the interests of women” (ibid.). The argument has also been criticized, for example by Anna Jonasdottir,<sup>530</sup> for having an “inherent” problem: “Within the frames of utility the presence of women revolves around what they ‘offer in return’. According to Jonasdottir, the difference argument is based on a degrading discourse, where the position of women remains that of ‘the other’ – the one whose position needs to be justified” (ibid.). Teigen considers, however, the Norwegian case “generally” to be an argument against Jonasdottir’s “warning”: “In spite of the strong position of difference arguments in Norwegian politics, demands of proof for what they offer in return *as women* are mostly not present in the public debate” (original emphasis, ibid.).<sup>531</sup>

Finally, the third discursive strategy recommended by Teigen, is the adoption of a “social justice perspective”, such as the one defended by Iris Marion Young<sup>532</sup> or Françoise Gaspard,<sup>533</sup> from which “an imbalance in the distribution of positions of power and influence between men and women emerges as itself a problem of democracy” (ibid.). By this move, one avoids debates on whether individuals are discriminated against, on whether recruitment is meritocratic, and on whether women contribute anything in particular, Teigen argues. Again, Norway is a good example:

The inclusion of women in political decision making in Norway illustrates how the discourse has changed from a question of why there are so few women, and what women may

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<sup>529</sup> And her book *The Politics of Presence*.

<sup>530</sup> For example in her book *Love, Power and Political Interests*.

<sup>531</sup> “When it comes to the new credo of economic life, continually repeating the benefits of difference/diversity, there may still be good reasons for warning about possible counter-effects, however” (Teigen 2000: 74).

<sup>532</sup> In her book *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

<sup>533</sup> Gaspard’s ambition is to justify the demand of the French “parity movement” for “50/50 representation of men and women inscribed within all laws and regulations” (Teigen 2000: 70).

contribute, to a situation where gender equality is what is 'natural'. [...] Today, an argument for pure merit selection to political positions would probably be briskly rejected. Such arguments rather emerge as illegitimate views with the intention of holding on to power positions of men. Hence, we may say that in Norwegian politics today the 'burden of proof' is on those opposing affirmative action (op.cit.: 74-75).

Also, in Norway today, Teigen sums up, the debate on affirmative action is "pragmatic", in the sense that "all arguments are relevant as long as they lead to gender equality" (op.cit.: 75).

Teigen treats Dworkin's defense of equality first and foremost as a strategic resource in the argument for affirmative action policies. Dworkin's defense can be turned into a "relevant" argument, because it can be construed as compatible with the notion of "gender equality" allowing for affirmative action (ibid.). The question of argumentative validity is secondary: If Dworkin's argument was not compatible with a defense of affirmative action, this would be, it seems, first of all primarily a reason to dismiss his argument, not affirmative action policies; gender equality that allows for affirmative action is assumed to be a just cause. That other discursive strategies – "the gender difference arguments" and "the social justice perspective" (op.cit.: 73, 74) – are defended whether they are compatible with Dworkin's argument or not,<sup>534</sup> strengthens the impression that his defense of equality is treated primarily as something of "pragmatic" use (op.cit.: 75); as something that might facilitate a particular political agenda.<sup>535</sup>

There are more examples of a primarily strategic approach to the arguments provided by the thinking of modernity. Some of these emphasize optimistically the "relevance" of these arguments (ibid.); modern arguments are valuable strategic tools.<sup>536</sup> Other arguments are however also relevant, such as the difference argument, also mentioned by Teigen, i.e. not only liberalism and the thinking of modernity are approached strategically. Contributors frequently describe feminist struggles as sometimes relying on the difference argument, at other times on liberal ideas of equal rights, linked to what is rhetorically effective in different

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<sup>534</sup> Teigen is clearly aware of this. She even highlights the argumentative differences between Dworkin's prescriptions for affirmative action policies, and what is allowed from a social justice perspective.

<sup>535</sup> My point here is not to argue that Dworkin's position is defensible from an argumentative point of view, or to argue that affirmative action policies are not. My point is that the question of the validity of Dworkin's argument is of secondary significance in "The affirmative action controversy".

<sup>536</sup> Cf. Holter (1996), Kaul (1998), Widerberg (2000b). Holter, Kaul and Widerberg all highlight the significant strategic role of arguments of "justice" (Holter), "equality" (Kaul) and of "liberalism" and "gender-neutrality" (Widerberg) when defending feminist norms. Others use concepts and distinctions from the normative thinking of modernity as analytical devices to capture empirical gender relations. One example is Gro Hagemann and Klas Åmark (1999) who use the notion of 'contract', as developed in the modern contract tradition from Hobbes and Locke to Rawls, in empirical analysis.

situations.<sup>537</sup> Professor in history Kari Melby analyzes “the strategies of femininity” in the Norwegian organization of housewives and the Norwegian union of female teachers; how the two organizations have related to and used “the equal rights strategy” and “the difference strategy” (1997: 53).<sup>538</sup>

On the one hand this [discussion on women’s politics] was [...] founded on ideas of gender complementarity, on the other hand [...] [on the idea of] gender equality. Several distinctions are used to describe the two trends; equality-difference [...], individualism-relationalism, individualism-communitarianism. [...] These are distinctions that reflect a feminist dilemma spurred by the Western Enlightenment tradition based on demands of universal and individual human rights anchored in an abstract concept of equality. The question has been [...], how women have accentuated or toned down their difference from men as part of their feminist strategies (op.cit.: 34).

There is a “dilemma” here,<sup>539</sup> one cannot accentuate and tone down the female difference at the same time (ibid.). However, in practice, Melby argues, women can sometimes highlight their femininity, sometimes emphasize how they are men’s equals, relative to what serves their interests and aims and to what is possible and meaningful in the cultural and political context in which their strategies are developed.

Melby’s particular concern is to highlight the limits of liberal strategies in women’s politics; the argument for women’s rights and equality is not always relevant. Sometimes the effective rhetoric is what Hege Skjeie refers to as “the rhetoric of difference” (1992: 100).<sup>540</sup> Several contributors suggest that liberalism and the thinking of modernity generally has lost its strategic relevance: Feminists should make their case in other vocabularies. Feminists need to make a new “creative space for thinking for women”, feminism should be based on “a ‘belief’ or a narrative that can serve women’s interests” (von der Fehr 1995: 167): The modern vocabulary of women as “rightful [...] moral subjects” no longer moves us (ibid.).<sup>541</sup> Modern

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<sup>537</sup> Cf. Brækhus (1995, 2000), Rasmussen (1999), Skjeie and Siim (2000), Haukanes (2001), Skjeie and Teigen (2003), Hagemann (2003), Halsaa (2003).

<sup>538</sup> The (translated) title of this analysis is *The Strategies of Femininity. Norwegian Organization of Housewives 1915-1940 and Norwegian Female Teachers’ Union 1912-1940*.

<sup>539</sup> Even if Melby suggests later in her presentation that the dilemma can be solved, if equality is defined not as “sameness”, and it is recognized that demands for equality are connected to the fact that there are “real differences” between women and men; “it is the actual differences between women and men that give the demand for equality meaning” (1997: 56). She refers in this connection to Joan W. Scott’s argument.

<sup>540</sup> Skjeie accentuates the crucial role of the difference argument for the inclusion of women in Norwegian elite politics. Others who emphasize the strategic significance of the difference argument are, for example, Melby (1996, 1997) and Skilbrei (2002).

<sup>541</sup> Von der Fehr refers to Richard Rorty’s argument in his essay “Feminism and Pragmatism” (1991). Von der Fehr is critical of Rorty’s anti-realist notion of women’s identity (see 5.4.4), but subscribes to Rorty’s claim about the inadequacy of feminist struggles conceptualized within the modern vocabulary.

“political manifesto[s]” are “called into question [...] in the wake of the disintegration of all grand narratives [...]” (Mortensen 2003: 121). Some welcome this development, as they believe it widens the scope for thinking feminist strategies anew.<sup>542</sup> Some worry about the persuasiveness of “fashionable” postmodern vocabulary in contemporary feminism (Solheim 1998: 26).<sup>543</sup> Others note that the modern imaginary maintains its grip on us in research and on other social arenas – unfortunately.<sup>544</sup>

As Teigen stresses in her explication of the affirmative action controversy, Norwegian political feminism is developed within a “pragmatic” political culture (2000: 75).<sup>545</sup> Those arguments are considered salient that work to the advantage of the feminist cause. This is also a common approach in academic feminism: The instrumentally oriented discussions on feminist strategies are extensive and varied. One group of authors contributing to these discussions, are those who identify with political feminism, i.e. those who see their role as feminist researchers as primarily facilitating the agenda of the women’s movement, feminist politicians and femocrats.<sup>546</sup> Indeed, feminist activists and bureaucrats participate themselves in the academic discourse on feminist strategies, assuming a similar relationship between science and politics.<sup>547</sup> However, there are also femocrats who argue for a new ‘contract’ between academic and political feminism, different from the old ‘state feminist’ contract; a contract which is up to date with the postmodern feminist critique of science (Gulbrandsen 1998a, 1998b).<sup>548</sup> Contributors who occupy academic positions and rely on postmodern perspectives seldom translate their reflections into concrete proposals of institutional reform or new policies, even if there are exceptions.<sup>549</sup> What is worth nothing, however, is how these contributors often position their assessment of theory, concepts and politics as “strategic”;

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<sup>542</sup> Cf. Asdal, Brenne, Gulbrandsen, Moser and Refseth (1998), Bjerrum Nielsen (2000), Windern Owesen (2000/2001), Markussen (2002), Egeland (2004a, 2004b).

<sup>543</sup> Cf. L’orange Fürst (1995, 1999), Iversen (1996), Moi (1999), Bleie (2003).

<sup>544</sup> Cf. Loga (2002), Gressgård (2003). Therefore, Ann Therese Lotherington, notes: “To dismiss the notions of liberalism entirely will be [...] problematic, because we are ourselves bearers of this philosophical tradition, and because we have to communicate with others within this same tradition” (1999: 188).

<sup>545</sup> See also Chapter 6.

<sup>546</sup> Cf. Haukaa (1991), Wærness (1995), Halsaa (1996), Eeg-Henriksen (1998), Fyhn (1999). Janneke van der Ros (1996b) gives an elaborate analysis of the role of the femocrats, bureaucrats working with feminist issues.

<sup>547</sup> Cf. Stabel (1992), Oftung (1995), Krane Bostad (1995), Strøm (1995), Salimi (1997), Skotnes (2004).

<sup>548</sup> Gulbrandsen refers among others to Donna Haraway and Rosi Braidotti.

<sup>549</sup> At least if we include contributors who rely on postmodern perspectives in addition to other approaches. Consider for example Bugge Tenden’s (2002) proposals for a change in the Norwegian sexual harassment law, and Berit Brandth and Elin Kvande’s (2003) proposal to extend the period of paternity leave after the birth of a child.

what they investigate and search for, are very often feminist “strategies”.<sup>550</sup> But this focus on “strategy” runs parallel to their critique of “technical” means-end thinking (Mortensen 1994, 2003). Thus, what is called for are different, more subtle post-ways of thinking strategy.

To approach arguments exclusively from a strategic point of view, is not to consider their validity: Whether an argument is considered useful is relative to its strategic effectiveness in a particular context. The contributors who argue against relativism, because, for example, they consider this position to be generally self-contradictory,<sup>551</sup> or because they are concerned in particular with the contradiction between a feminist commitment and a relativist stand,<sup>552</sup> at least implicitly, dismiss reducing arguments to purely strategic moves. Additionally, there are the postmodern contributions who talk about feminist politics in terms of ‘strategies’, at the same time as raising a radical critique of attempts to reduce human relations to instrumental relations.<sup>553</sup> This indicates that talking about approaching theory and politics ‘strategically’ in the context of postmodern theorizing does not necessarily mean prescribing a means-ends approach. The strategy-vocabulary used in this setting is, it seems, rather a way of conceptualizing theory and politics in a manner that recognizes both the fundamental discursive constitution of subjects<sup>554</sup> and the possibility of embedded and embodied, effective but ethical practice – this is what is referred to as ‘strategic’ practice – as ‘subjected’ persons; that is as subjects inevitably constituted by the power-knowledge networks of discourse.<sup>555</sup>

A few other things need to be stressed, moreover. First, it is not only the modern motif that is approached instrumentally in the strategic discourse on feminism. As in the case of Teigen, the ‘pragmatic’ assessment of an argument as ‘relevant’, or irrelevant, is more a general way of looking at things. Teigen’s contribution is also an example of another more general

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<sup>550</sup> Cf. Holtan Sørensen (1991, 1993), Christie Mathiesen (1993, 1998), Asdal and Brenna (1998), Moser (1998), Birkeland (2000). Melby’s discussion of ‘the strategies of femininity’ can be read into such a postmodern discourse on strategy as far as it rests on, among others, Joan W Scott’s approach. Consider also Cathrine Egeland’s discussion of Gayatri Spivak’s “Marxist” but “deconstructivist” notion of “strategic essentialism”: “Class consciousness is something you *take on strategically* – We are workers! – with the aim of abolishing the basis of class consciousness, that is the class in itself”, Egeland argues with Spivak, and suggests that feminists should approach the category of women in a similar way (original emphasis, 2003: 14).

<sup>551</sup> Cf. Solheim (1990), Engelstad (1991), Schmidt (1999), Serck-Hanssen (2000/2001).

<sup>552</sup> Cf. Kaiser (1990), Blom (1995), Ve (1999).

<sup>553</sup> This is, in fact, an objection often raised against the thinking of modernity, see 5.4.12.

<sup>554</sup> Authors often referred to in this connection are Michel Foucault and Judith Butler.

<sup>555</sup> Cf. Flemmen (1999), Eng and Markussen (2000), Bolsø (2002), Markussen (2002). Generally speaking, it is obviously important to recognize the context in which a term is introduced. Consider for example Tove Thagaard’s use (1996) of the term ‘negotiation’ to analyze the interaction between couples. Clearly, ‘negotiations’ here should not be understood in terms of a rational-choice notion of bargaining, but rather in terms of a sociological notion of meaningful, normatively oriented interaction.

tendency: Arguments might be viewed primarily from the perspective of rhetorical effectiveness. Their validity might, however, also be taken into account. Teigen clearly tries to make the three discursive strategies more efficient by trying to refute arguments that have been raised against them. Finally, contributions that focus on strategic means-end considerations in their approach to feminism often either assume that there are valid ends from an argumentative point of view – be it moral norms, legal rules or political decisions – or they discuss, if only briefly, why the ends they struggle to achieve are justified ends. Generally speaking, one cannot simply deduce from the fact that a contributor concentrates on strategic issues to the fact that she thinks that all issues can and should be discussed only in strategic terms.

#### 5.4.7 The problems of universalism

The anthology *Forståelser av kjønn*<sup>556</sup> edited by Arnhild Taksdal and Karin Widerberg contains articles on how the different disciplines within the social sciences approach gender. Several of the articles deal elaborately and critically with the universalist stance of modern thought.<sup>557</sup> I will focus on the article on gender in psychology, “Kjønn som forsvant? Om betydningen av kjønn i psykologien” (1992)<sup>558</sup> by Agnes Andenæs, Birte Folgerø Johannessen and Tone Ødegård. One of the main targets of the authors is “the androcentrism” of psychology – its false universalism – when “cultural norms of masculinity” are positioned as universal norms of what is “human” (op.cit.: 52, 61). Androcentrism haunts main-stream psychological theories of “social learning”:

While Freud operates with gender specific ideals of personal development (normal femininity and masculinity), the learning theorists operate with a supposedly gender-neutral ideal of personal development.<sup>559</sup> Lazarus<sup>560</sup> emphasizes for example that behavioural therapy has the same therapeutic goal for women and men, namely self-conscious behaviour. [...] the goal put forward by the learning theorists lay (and still lies) closer, however, to the cultural ideal of masculinity than to the cultural ideal of femininity. The ideal of masculinity is made into the norm of humanity, and the ideal of femininity is nearly positioned as the opposite of the ideal of self-conscious behaviour (op.cit.: 56)

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<sup>556</sup> *Understandings of Gender*.

<sup>557</sup> Such as the article by Marit Melhuus, Ingrid Rudie and Jorun Solheim on gender in social anthropology, and the article by Arnlaug Leira on gender in sociology.

<sup>558</sup> “The Disappearing Gender? About the Meaning of Gender in Psychology”.

<sup>559</sup> The authors also criticize Freud’s psychoanalytical approach, his “biological determinism” and his positioning of women as men’s subordinates because of their anatomy, personality and “natural” social position (1992: 54). Thus, Freud’s thinking is patriarchal – but not because of its androcentrism.

<sup>560</sup> They refer to Arnhold A. Lazarus’ article “Women in behaviour therapy”.

Main-stream psychological theories of cognition and cognitive development, such as the theory of Lawrence Kohlberg are also considered to be androcentric.<sup>561</sup> Kohlberg analyzes gender differences in personality development, in particular how boys and girls relate differently to moral questions. Generally speaking, girls concentrate more than boys on “being attractive, good and socially accepted”, less on seeking “power, prestige and competence” (op.cit.: 58); “girls focus upon good-girl ideal-self morality” (op.cit.: 59). The consequence is that girls enter what Kohlberg refers to as stage three, “the good boy/good girl stage”, in moral development earlier than boys – there are six stages in all (ibid.). The problem is that they remain there longer. Many girls never leave it, even as grown-ups. They continue to consider “other people’s opinions” about what they do as “decisive”, and “interpersonal relations” as “primary” (ibid.). During stages four, five and six “one increasingly conceives of norms and rules as relative”, until one finally ends up making moral decisions “independently, [...] on the basis of universal principles of justice such as freedom, equality and mutuality” (ibid.). More boys than girls reach these stages, and they do it faster, Kohlberg argues. Andenæs, Folgerø Johannessen and Ødegård criticize Kohlberg’s approach, drawing on Carol Gilligan’s critique in *In a Different Voice* published in 1982:

She [Gilligan] studies the content of girls’ deliberations on moral dilemmas, and points out how unreasonable it is that masculine ideals and boys’ development are made the norm used to assess girls’ moral development and moral capacities. This makes us deaf to the difference girls make, to ‘the other voice’. She also redefines the understanding of the individual so that it refers to persons *in relations* more than to *autonomous selves* (original emphasis, ibid.).<sup>562</sup>

Once more, the problem is that of *false* universalism and androcentrism; “the male is made the standard of comparison” (op.cit.: 63).

To accuse modern thought of androcentrism is extremely common. Many of the descriptions and prescriptions it introduces as universal are, it is argued, really descriptions and prescriptions seen from a male point of view.<sup>563</sup> Often the charge is made more general: The exclusion of women’s experiences and views is linked to the overall exclusion of the experiences and views of all people who do not fit into the category of the adult, independent,

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<sup>561</sup> The authors refer to an article by Kohlberg and Edward Ziegler of 1967, “The impact of cognitive maturity on the development of sex-role attitudes in the years four to eight”.

<sup>562</sup> Consider the discussion of the modern autonomous subject in 5.4.4.

<sup>563</sup> Cf. Songe-Møller (1990, 1994, 1997, 1999c), Melhuus, Rudie and Solheim (1992), Wesenberg (1995), Barth (1996), Ellingsæter (1999), Lotherington (1999).



male, Western *bourgeois*. Thus, the exclusion of ethnic minorities,<sup>564</sup> of those who need care,<sup>565</sup> of the working class,<sup>566</sup> and of children,<sup>567</sup> also makes the universalist speak of the modern imaginary false.

Another way of questioning universalism is to argue that claims cannot be valid for all: Modern universal consensus is *unachievable*; any defense of universalism is inevitably a defense of false universalism. Several authors argue that what we consider to be *true* about the world is relative to context: “The world is accessible to us”, but how we perceive it depends on “our experience and background and the historical context we are in on a particular point in time”, Ann Therese Lotherington and Turid Markussen assert (1999: 22).<sup>568</sup> What we regard to be “real” and “true” is relative to “language and discourse”, pedagogy scholar Trine Annfelt maintains:<sup>569</sup> “Truth and reality are [...] produced through discursive practice. [...] The aim of inquiry is not to come close to reality, but to show how, and explain precisely why existing reality came to count as reality” (1998: 9). Ethnologist Tone Hellesund subscribes to a “constructivist” approach to knowledge, and “constructivism is also to a certain extent about relativism”, she adds (2002: 75):

Constructivism is [...] about relativism, meaning epistemological anti-realism. A certain kind of epistemological relativism<sup>570</sup> or anti-realism seems to be a fundamental part of the postmodern paradigm, and epistemological relativism refers to the meaningless of talking about an absolute reality that we cannot know anything about. Processes of knowledge are not drifted by forces in nature – knowledges are always social products, ‘they are products of historically and culturally situated interactions among actors. Knowledge, outcomes of scientific investigations included, is, according to this understanding, never reflections of ‘reality’ or purely realistic maps portraying real phenomena’ (ibid.).<sup>571</sup>

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<sup>564</sup> Cf. Bredal (1994), Borchgrevink (1999), Jacobsen and Gressgård (2002).

<sup>565</sup> Cf. Widding Isaksen (1992), Christensen (1997), Martinsen (1997), Schmidt (1999).

<sup>566</sup> Cf. Ve (1999), Skilbrei (2004).

<sup>567</sup> See for example Bojer (2002).

<sup>568</sup> See 5.4.5 for elaboration of variants of this argument.

<sup>569</sup> Annfelt refers to Foucault.

<sup>570</sup> A “total ontological relativism” is a “somewhat more problematic” position, Hellesund maintains, and stresses that “discussions of whether there is a world, a reality, outside the discourses, outside the scientifically conceivable, fall far outside the scope of this project” (2002: 75). She subscribes, however, to the view that “there is nothing in the world that determines or necessitates a particular configuration of conceptual categories” (ibid.).

<sup>571</sup> Hellesund quotes the Danish psychologist and feminist theorist Dorte Marie Søndergard, who works within the postmodern paradigm. Other names referred to in Hellesund’s discussion of her constructivist position are “antihumanists” such as Michel Foucault, Niklas Luhmann, Jacques Derrida and Judith Butler, and “humanist” constructivists such as Alfred Schütz, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and Toril Moi (2002: 72-89).

Several contributors stress the impossibility of universal consensus on a particular set of claims about the world; of *descriptions of systems and groups of people*. The idea of a universal gendered power system that pervades all societies and cultures is often criticized.<sup>572</sup> “Such a perspective makes it difficult to theorize both the vast historical variation in women’s situation, and the parallel variation relative to ethnicity/race and class”, sociologist Anne Lise Ellingsæter and co-author Jorun Solheim argue (2002: 29). Social anthropologist Christine M. Jacobsen and sociologist Randi E. Gressgård maintain that “what in feminist politics and theory are stressed as being general female experiences and values, are really linked to white North American middle-class women’s particular lifeform”, and question “universalizing theories and so-called grand narratives” (2002: 206).<sup>573</sup> Jacobsen and Gressgård connect the “ethnocentrism” of “grand narratives” to “liberalism” (*ibid.*),<sup>574</sup> as do several others.<sup>575</sup>

Many contributors dismiss universal descriptions of female experiences and values along the lines suggested by Ellingsæter and Solheim, Jacobsen and Gressgård in the above passages, because such descriptions necessarily exclude empirical variations. Defenders of general descriptions of women and women’s situation are sometimes referred to as ‘essentialists’, or said to defend ‘essentialism’.<sup>576</sup> Those inspired by “poststructuralism and French feminism” dismiss essentialism on the basis of a particular theory of meaning and language (L’orange Fürst 1998: 176):

He [Derrida] [...] dismisses the belief in ‘reality’ as representable as a kind of essence and thereby also dismisses *essentialism*. [...] reality is produced as writing and discourse. [...] This thinking of identity [...] is based on [...] a false idea, namely that true, self-identical meaning is at all possible. The belief that we can immediately identify the essence of something in itself, is erroneous, because wherever there is meaning, there is difference. Where we can identify something, there is distance. This distance characterizes knowledge generally, whether written or spoken. [...] Meaning is unstable. Meaning is produced again and again in a process of difference and displacement. [...] Meaning is displaced in an endless process. [...] there is no ultimate reference where difference has come to an end (original emphasis, *op.cit.*: 179, 180, 181).

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<sup>572</sup> See also the critique of patriarchy, outlined in 5.4.11.

<sup>573</sup> Such questioning has become “more common” within “feminist theory and practice” (Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002: 206).

<sup>574</sup> Representing liberals in their discussion are Susan Moller Okin and Will Kymlicka, and Norwegian intellectuals such as the social anthropologist Unni Wikan.

<sup>575</sup> Consider also the presentation of Anne Hellum’s argument for a pluralist approach to women’s law elaborated in 5.4.3.

<sup>576</sup> Cf. Gullvåg Holter (1991a), Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (1994), Davidsen, Solli and Waaler (1996), Gressgård (2003), Eng and Markussen (2000), Svare (2001), Stenvoll (2002), Mühleisen (2004).

Thus, the term ‘women’ has no “ultimate meaning” (op.cit.: 181). Poststructuralists accuse defenders of general descriptions of women and women’s situation of relying, if only implicitly, on a notion of “ultimate reference[s]”; they “make difference into *sameness*” (original emphasis, *ibid.*). At other times, accusations of essentialism are less specific: Descriptions of women’s life or the oppression of women may be referred to as essentialist simply because they are considered to exclude significant empirical variations, or because they rely too heavily on biological explanations of gender difference.<sup>577</sup>

Finally, there is the view that not all will agree on claims about what *ought* to be.<sup>578</sup> Group variations in moral ideas, for example, between women and men,<sup>579</sup> working-class and middle-class women,<sup>580</sup> Western women and non-Western women,<sup>581</sup> highlight the fact that universal moral consensus is unachievable. Some link their dismissal of moral universalism to the poststructuralist critique of essentialism: Moral universalists consider moral norms to have “ultimate reference[s]” (*ibid.*). Arguments against the possibility of moral universalism are, moreover, often linked to emotivist<sup>582</sup> approaches to morality; it is portrayed as depending on our sentiments. We will never all feel the same about an issue; our “values, experiences, hopes, dreams and fantasies” will differ (Jacobsen and Gressgård 2002: 199). Last but not least, the critique of the possibility of moral universalism is also challenged by elaborations of politics as a struggle between “opposite interests”, i.e. interests than cannot be universalized;<sup>583</sup> some will inevitably loose, and some will win in the political “struggles” for “redistribution” and “definition” (Halsaa 2003: 9, 13). Politics, in short, is considered to be a struggle for cultural and social hegemony: There are no real universalizable interests, or at least fewer than the thinkers of modernity assume.<sup>584</sup>

Thus, because universal consensus is impossible to achieve, aiming to achieve at it is idle, or worse, an expression of denial; the genuinely knowledge-seeking subject is diverted into

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<sup>577</sup> Cf. Moi (1999), Rustad (1999), Lie (2002).

<sup>578</sup> Consider also the critique of abstract morality in 5.4.3.

<sup>579</sup> Cf. Wærness (1990), Holtan Sørensen (1991), Oftedal Telhaug (1992), Ve (1993), Mathiesen (2000).

<sup>580</sup> Cf. Pettersen (1999), Ve (1999a), Skilbrei (2002).

<sup>581</sup> Cf. Gerrard and Valestrand (1999a, 1999b), Berg (2004).

<sup>582</sup> See 5.4.12.

<sup>583</sup> See also Brita M. Gulli’s elaboration of conflicts and power in 5.4.9.

<sup>584</sup> This point is made for example in contributions influenced by the realistic school in political science (see Østerud, Engelstad and Selle 2003), by the republican political thinking of Hannah Arendt (see Loga 2002, Brandser 2002, Svenneby 2002), in works influenced by Marxism and radical feminism (such as Halsaa’s contributions), and in contributions relying on poststructuralism and psychoanalysis (for example Egeland 2004a).

becoming an ideology-producing subject, who is unable to grasp the real mechanisms of oppression.<sup>585</sup> Were it possible to achieve general agreement on what is right, moreover, this would not necessarily be *desirable or reasonable*. Several authors interpret the aim of moral universalism as an oppressive normalizing prescription. To think, feel and value the same things and live in the same way are not things we should seek to accomplish. We should instead learn to “live in a landscape of differences around us and within us [...] founded in a non-hierarchical perspective” (von der Lippe 1999: 105).<sup>586</sup> Other commentators elaborate on what they consider to be the unfortunate normative implications of the modern idea of universal truth, and look for alternative criteria in “research and science” that might give us “new and different knowledge in and about the world, localized, partial, critical and solidaric – better justified knowledge” (Asdal, Berg, Brenna, Moser and Rustad 1998: 5).

Many would prefer, however, not to give up on universalism.<sup>587</sup> Some maintain that modern universalism has a core that is not androcentric, or generally *false*. Political scientist Nina Raaum connects for example, her feminist liberalism with the “liberal” notion of “natural rights”: “The idea is that all individuals are born free and with equal ‘natural rights’” (1995: 23). Camilla Serck-Hanssen (2000/2001) links feminism as a moral project to Kant’s transcendental defense of human beings’ equal worth. Others stress the validity of the modern standard of truth, and that it, on the basis of this standard, is possible to “say that one kind of knowledge is better or more truth-like than another” (Kaiser 1990: 224).<sup>588</sup> The main problem, according to these commentators, is not that the standards of critique defended by the thinkers of modernity are androcentric or generally false, but that we fail to live up to them in our actual practices. Political scientist Eli Stamnes relies on the tradition of critical theory stemming from Max Horkheimer, Jürgen Habermas and Axel Honneth, and its idea of an “unfulfilled human potential” to be used when we “criticize existing practices”; the “potential of emancipation” as “normative yardstick” when assessing “different practices” (2000: 9). Such defenses of the universality of modern standards are often accompanied by a critique of theories which claim that particular groups, such as women, share certain common experiences, interests and values, and, because of this, subscribe to and should subscribe to

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<sup>585</sup> Such reflections can be found in contributions inspired by for example Marxism (see the elaboration of Gullvåg Holter’s argument in 5.4.11), or psychoanalysis (for example Soleim 1994, Hamm 2001, Granaas 2004).

<sup>586</sup> Berit von der Lippe refers to Donna Haraway and Teresa de Lauretis.

<sup>587</sup> See also my defense of moral universalism in Chapter 7.

<sup>588</sup> For more examples, see 5.4.5.

their own standards of critique.<sup>589</sup> Carol Gilligan's critique of Lawrence Kohlberg's model of moral development, on which Andenæs, Folgerø Johannessen and Ødegård (1992) base their criticism of androcentrism, is questioned and dismissed by several contributors.<sup>590</sup>

Not only the idea that modern universalism is false is questioned. Questioned is also the claim that it is *unachievable*, i.e. to the extent that modern articulations of standards of critique are androcentric, ethnocentric or heterosexist or in other senses expressions of false universalism, they could in fact be made universal. This point is sometimes made in terms of an immanent critique of the thinking of modernity; the thinking is considered to be based on a universal core that is often blurred by particular thinkers influenced by the patriarchal prejudices which have pervaded historically the culture and structural organization of societies<sup>591</sup> – and continue to do so.<sup>592</sup> Other contributors attempt to articulate universal standards of critique relying primarily or at least considerably on other intellectual resources than what we talk of here as the thinking of modernity. One example is philosopher Arne Johan Vetlesen's defense of a "morality" which "*is, prior to reflection and discourse*" as a "product of living with (close, significant) others"; which is inspired by Aristotelian ethics and Emmanuel Levinas' notion of "nonsymmetrical and unconditional" moral responsibility (1996: 101). Another example is philosopher Kari Martinsen's attempt to articulate general ethical insights about "love" and "care for others" as "the most fundamental in our lives" and "the most natural of all", based on the phenomenological reflections of the Danish theologian K. E Løgstrup (1997: 8).<sup>593</sup> A third example is Turid Markussen who explores the Foucauldian notion of "life" as the "irreducible other" of power, "the space for opposition against power where power is", as "a basis for ethical reflection and political resistance" (2002: 241, 242).<sup>594</sup> All in all, there is significant opposition to the idea that we cannot reach agreement on standards when we discuss what is right or true, often connected to an expressed dismissal of

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<sup>589</sup> Consider for example Kari Elisabeth Børresen's defense of universal human rights (1995a, 1998, 1999a), and Brandth and Kvande's (2003) argument that men and women are equally capable of, and obligated to, care for children.

<sup>590</sup> Cf. Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (1994), Solheim (1999).

<sup>591</sup> Consider Anne Birgitte Rønning's (1999) assessment of John Stuart Mill and Tove Stang Dahl's assessment of the Kantian tradition.

<sup>592</sup> Consider Kjersti Fjørtoft's (2002) and Else Bugge Tenden's (2002) assessment of John Rawls, or Hege Skjeie's (2004) assessment of contemporary human rights debates.

<sup>593</sup> Martinsen's perspective of care is elaborated as a critical alternative to modern theories of justice.

<sup>594</sup> Markussen does so in specific opposition to Nancy Fraser's Habermas-inspired critique of the inadequate treatment of the question of legitimacy in Foucault's approach to power.

‘relativism’:<sup>595</sup> Even if many would not embrace universalism, at least not explicitly, very few, if any, embrace relativism as a viable critical position.<sup>596</sup>

When modern universalism is defended as being achievable, contributors often concentrate on clearing up what they consider to be misunderstandings about what a defense of it implies. Some stress, for example, that modern universalism is compatible with fallibilism. To embrace it is not to defend any idea of eternal, non-correctable knowledge. “All we assume to know (cognitions) is hypothetical and open to correction”, Drude von der Fehr notes in a presentation of Charles Sanders Peirce’s epistemology (1990: 85).<sup>597</sup> May Thorseth asserts along similar lines that Jürgen Habermas’ and Karl Otto Apel’s “communicative consensus theory of truth” implies that “truth and rightness are ideals within the communicating community, [which] [...] means that all theories (statements, propositions) must be open to argument in principle – and thereby become revisional” (1993: 16). Other commentators emphasize the distinction between the moral and the ethical.<sup>598</sup> Even though the thinkers of modernity defend moral universalism, that we can agree on common moral norms and procedures, ethical universalism, universal values – unanimous conceptions of the good life among citizens – are in fact not regarded as achievable: “[...] women’s lives are so varied that it is difficult to unite around common women’s interests and women’s needs”, without suppressing a “minority”, perhaps even “a significant minority” of women who consider their “interests” and “needs” to be different, Nina Raaum argues (1995: 30, 35). Her view, that ethical universalism is hardly or not at all achievable, is however compatible with, even an argument in favor of, universal liberal norms: “Precisely the fear of an unlimited political authority, where a small majority can run over a significant minority, is one of liberalism’s justifications for limiting the public (and protecting the private) through procedural rules and individual rights” (op.cit.: 35).

Modern thought’s proposed reliance on indefensible generalized descriptions of systems and groups of people, is also questioned. Such thought does not, for example, it is argued, assume

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<sup>595</sup> Cf. Rudberg (1996), Sümer (1998), Lie (2002).

<sup>596</sup> Those who come closest are those who elaborate deconstructive or “undermining” strategies of critique (Egeland 2004a: 185), inspired by poststructuralist theory.

<sup>597</sup> Von der Fehr compares Peirce with the feminist standpoint epistemology of Alison M. Jaggar (1991: 88). She considers Peirce to be less “dogmatic” than Jaggar due to this fallibilistic approach: “A feminist science cannot [...] work on the basis that women possess a peculiar cognitive knowledge. To assert this, is to express a faith, a faith which cannot continually be checked experimentally and scientifically methodically, and which brings us sooner or later to Cartesian dogmatism” (ibid.).

<sup>598</sup> As elaborated in 2.4.5.

a general theory of patriarchy or women's situation. This view, that it does not, is often raised in fact as a critique against it: Thinking about "power" in terms of "rights" is "inadequate" when it comes to "the analysis of gender power as a societal phenomenon – it does not capture the categorical character of this power as a 'particular' dominance relationship" (Ellingsæter and Solheim 2002: 21).<sup>599</sup> Generally speaking, several contributors rely on general notions of gender power, women's situation or experiences. They thus question, at least by implication, the critique of modern thought that relies on a dismissal of such notions.<sup>600</sup> The claim that such notions are essentialist, in the sense that this term is used by poststructuralist theorists, is also countered, implicitly – when contributors defend general descriptions of women's situation without commenting on this poststructuralist objection,<sup>601</sup> or explicitly – when alternative theories of meaning are introduced and subscribed to.<sup>602</sup>

There are, moreover, several intermediate positions between claiming modern universalism to be achievable, on the one hand, and relativism on the other. One has already been mentioned: To assert that there are universal standards of what is right and true, but relying on intellectual resources collected from other imaginaries than the modern one. Additionally, there are contributors who dismiss universalism as conceptualized by certain thinkers of modernity, but defend it as conceptualized by others.<sup>603</sup> Furthermore, there are contributors who do not deny that there are standards of what is right and true, even if we cannot refer to them as ultimately universal: People with overlapping basic worldviews and experiences, might, for example, agree on certain common critical yardsticks, even if agreement on these standards cannot be considered achievable in all contexts. Gro Hagemann argues along such lines when she maintains that people living in the historical situation of "the modern subject" would agree on the validity of the universal ethos of individual freedom and equality, because this situation has made possible critique as "justification of institutions, practices or traditions transcending the local context" (1994: 31, 33): The ethos of modernity is universal – but only when considered from the point of view of modernity as a particular historical situation.<sup>604</sup>

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<sup>599</sup> See also 5.4.11.

<sup>600</sup> There are also phenomenological and ontological conceptions about women's situation, see 5.4.14.

<sup>601</sup> Cf. Wærness (1995), Nilsen (1995), Syltevik (2000).

<sup>602</sup> Cf. Sümer (1998), Rustad (1999), Ve (1999), Holst (2002).

<sup>603</sup> One example is Eli Starnes, who dismisses modern critical standards as far as they are conceptualized as "external" criteria (2000: 8). She relies on thinkers of modernity who defend a notion of "immanent critique"; who use "the subject's/object's self-image and self-justification" to criticize what is "in fact" going on (ibid.). Other examples are those who consider liberalism to have been a progressive force in the past, and those who, on the contrary, emphasize classical liberalism's lack of sophistication when compared to contemporary liberal arguments (see also 5.4.2).

<sup>604</sup> Hagemann refers in this connection to Seyla Benhabib.

Professor of women's law, Kirsten Ketcher, moves in the same direction when she justifies "women's basic rights" with reference to "real circumstances" in "a modern world" which makes the justification of individual rights possible:

Basic rights are based on a common value orientation transcending national laws and national arrangements. A concept of basic rights can thus be seen as an answer to an increasing internationalization of law that makes a common legal basis necessary. Basic rights might possibly be conceived of as a juridification of a set of basic values that characterize Western democracies in particular. These values spread, however, and tend to become universal (2001: 145).

Finally, there is, as pointed out by some critics,<sup>605</sup> the phenomenon of implicit reliance on universal standards of what is right and true, even if this reliance is not necessarily commented upon by those who rely on them. Ellen Mortensen is concerned with the conditions for freedom within the phallogocentric order of the modern human condition, implicitly suggesting that freedom is something achievable, and something we should all, ultimately, strive to achieve, even if she explicitly dismisses all universalist talk as false and "Eurocentric" (2002: 3), or as a "verbal flow" that "ends up signifying nothing" (op.cit.: 100). Christine M. Jacobsen and Randi E. Gressgård criticize, on the one hand, the false universalism of "Western-liberal values of autonomy and freedom of choice" (2002: 199). On the other hand, they consider Western feminism to be "ethnocentric" when it does not acknowledge properly Muslim women's right to choose ways of life that are at odds with Western ideals of the good life; when they "choose *against* the conventional, Western understanding of freedom" (op.cit.: 202), appealing thus to an inter-cultural standard of "autonomy and freedom of choice" (op.cit.: 199).

That the universalist stance of modern thought is *undesirable or unreasonable* is also questioned, by the commentators that subscribe more or less whole-heartedly to a feminism inspired by such thought. Modern moral norms are not obstacles to pluralism, on the contrary, it is argued, they guarantee it: They are fundamental prerequisites for our free thinking and acting as citizens and private persons.<sup>606</sup> To say that people are equal, is not necessarily to say

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<sup>605</sup> Cf. Kaiser (1990), Engelstad (1991), Holst (2002). Consider also Tordis Borchgrevink (1999) who sketches an argument of performative self-contradiction in her critical reading of Hulda Garborg's subscribing to the misogynist views of Otto Weininger: By doing so, Garborg implicitly accepts social conditions, i.e. a misogynist social arrangement, that deprive her of the authority to subscribe to Weininger's ideas, or any other ideas, Borchgrevink notes.

<sup>606</sup> I read this as a core idea in Elin Svenneby's argument for a "radical humanism" (1999: 205). See also for example Raaum (1995), Bugge Tenden (2002), Skjeie (2004), Repstad (2004).



that they are *same*. Elisabeth L'orange Fürst points this out in a discussion of French feminism, i.e. in a passage where she reflects on what kind of equality-centered feminism French poststructuralist feminism opposes:

The discussion between equality feminism versus difference feminism refers to issues connected with *the same* versus the other/different. In Norwegian the word has different meanings: equality as the same (sameness) and equality as equal worth (equal). Difference (which French feminism pleads for) conflicts with the former meaning, but not the latter (my emphasis, 1999: 178).

The distinction between the moral and the ethical is once more crucial to uphold, some contributors maintain: Moral universalism is defensible from a perspective of pluralism, even if ethical universalism or “sameness” is not (ibid.). The strength of liberal theories of justice, Hilde Bojer sums up, is precisely that they articulate universal principles “[...] independent of the final good, enabling human beings to pursue their own good, whatever that may be, [...] it is always rational to want them whatever else one wants” (2002: 10). The point is to create morally defensible political arrangements that are compatible with different notions of the good life among citizens, not to put one notion of the good above others. As ethnologist Hilde Danielsen argues, arrangements are “just” when all people, both women and men, have “equal conditions to develop their potential as human beings”, “their individual capacities and collective communication and interaction” (2002: 90, 91, 93).<sup>607</sup> Others stress the value of objectivity in truth-seeking, in a modern meaning of the term: To strive to approach truth is something we both can and ought to do.<sup>608</sup>

#### **5.4.8 Individualism and the good community**

In her article “Forførelsens spill fra det tradisjonelle til det moderne”,<sup>609</sup> ethnologist Kari Telste compares a traditional “Casanova” or “seducer of women” – the “mythologized” Ole Tollefsen Myre from Hallingdal,<sup>610</sup> with the nickname “Blank-Ola”, operating early in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – with a modern seducer, the artist Hans Andersen with his nickname “Borgenstjerne”, living i Kristiania<sup>611</sup> around year 1900 (1999: 43-44). One of Telste’s main conclusions is that the implications for the women exposed to Borgenstjernes’ modern

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<sup>607</sup> She refers to Seyla Benhabib and Iris Marion Young.

<sup>608</sup> Cf. Raaum and Skogerbø (1993), Sørensen (1999), Bleie (2003a, 2003b) (see also 5.4.5).

<sup>609</sup> “The Game of Seduction from the Traditional to the Modern”.

<sup>610</sup> The name of a country-side district in the eastern part of Norway.

<sup>611</sup> The name of Oslo from 1877 to 1925.

seduction were different from and arguably worse than the implications for those seduced by Blank-Ola two centuries earlier. Because, whereas Blank-Ola was “bound to values anchored in codes of honor”, Borgenstjerne could work seemingly “free and unbounded” (op.cit.: 60):

To be sure he [Borgenstjerne] was punished<sup>612</sup> [...] for economic fraud, but society does not seem to have taken [his] [...] broken marriage vows seriously, even if there were legal rules saying that men who broke the marriage vow could be punished with prison if so demanded by the woman. Evidently, women had exactly the same expectations regarding the vow as before. Now, what they lacked (around 1900), was the means to force the man to stand by his vow (ibid.).

This observation contradicts, Telste notes, optimistic analyses of developments in modernity, such as that of Marshall Berman<sup>613</sup> who sees modernity “in a positive light” in contradiction to “the ugliness and brutality” of traditional societies (op.cit.: 45). But life in the “traditional world” was in fact not so “narrow-minded” as Berman presents it, and the modern “emancipation from social norms and values” are not unequivocally positive, at least not if assessed from a women’s perspective (ibid.). What happens in modern society, Telste argues, with reference to Seyla Benhabib<sup>614</sup> and Agnes Heller<sup>615</sup>, is that “the values anchored in the concept of honor” have been dismissed (op.cit.: 60). There has been:

[...] a development where norms are gradually becoming more abstract and nuanced. People can no longer receive support from institutionalized norms of action to decide what is right and wrong, but have to make moral deliberations to a greater extent than before. Moral deliberations often take as their point of departure existing practices and customs, but open for the possibility of questioning them, accepting, dismissing or choosing between them. Moral questions are being privatized as principles of conduct are made a question of what each can decide in accordance with her own conscience and perspective.<sup>616</sup> When the validity of existing models of action are weakened in this way, breaking norms may no longer necessarily lead to loss of honor, to shame, and sanctions imposed by the community (ibid.).

This had severe consequences for women who, around 1900, were not guaranteed “freedom and equality” – like men were, at least ideally – “women’s status was essentially hierarchical and unchanged” (op.cit.: 61).<sup>617</sup> Thus, a woman still had to “place her honor in the hands of a man and wait for him to make her a woman by means of marriage” (ibid.). However, due to modern de-traditionalization, this was now a far more risky thing for women to do: The

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<sup>612</sup> In court. Both Blank-Ola and Borgenstjerne had to appear in court several times because of their activities. Telste’s article is (among other things) based on a systematic study of these court cases.

<sup>613</sup> In his book *All that is Solid Melts into Air*.

<sup>614</sup> She refers to *Situating the Self. Gender, Community and Postmodernism in Contemporary Ethics*.

<sup>615</sup> She refers to *The Power of Shame. A Rational Perspective*.

<sup>616</sup> For the discussion on the relationship between public and private, see 5.4.10.

<sup>617</sup> Telste refers in this connection to Carol Pateman’s *The Sexual Contract*.

Casanovas seducing them no longer felt committed to “collective values” (op.cit.: 62). This disruption of collectivity left women more vulnerable than before.

I want to focus on three claims made in Telste’s argument. First, that the project of modernity is a project of individualism, and that it is a project incompatible with collectivism. Second, that individualism has unfortunate implications, particularly for women, while collectivism has fortunate implications, particularly for women. Third, that collectivism needs to be anchored in what Telste refers to as ‘collective values’.

The claim that the thinkers of modernity embrace individualism at the cost of, or at the likely cost of, community is an extremely common observation.<sup>618</sup> Modern individualism is, however, given different interpretations. Telste emphasizes the modern individual’s freedom to choose as a cultural ethos, i.e. the ethos of “autonomy and freedom of choice” (Sinding Aasen 1991: 42), the “liberal *credo*” of “personal freedom” (Borchgrevink 2002: 147, 148). With modern individualism she also refers to the conceptualization of the individual as a rights-holder, and links it to the institutionalization of individual rights as legal rights. Several commentators connect modern individualism to a notion of individual rights.<sup>619</sup> This notion is sometimes elaborated in general terms, i.e. in terms of people’s rights as persons or citizens, and thus of women’s rights as persons and citizens. The basis of “liberal-feminism” or “individual feminism” is that “liberal political principles about the equality and rights of the individual should apply to women just as they apply to men”, Beatrice Halsaa says (1996: 153). On other occasions the notion of individual rights is linked more specifically to their institutionalization in national laws, or connected with and discussed in relation to international conventions of human rights. There are, for example, studies which elaborate and assess the historical and contemporary development of civil, political and social rights in Norway,<sup>620</sup> in Scandinavia<sup>621</sup> and in Europe and the United States,<sup>622</sup> and studies which focus

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<sup>618</sup> Cf. Sinding Aasen (1991), Levin (1992), Gulli (1994), Elstad (1994), Andenæs (1995), Gulbrandsen (1995), L’orange Fürst (1995, 2002), Andersen (1996), Aslaksen (1996), Melby (1997), Flemmen (1999), Schmidt (1999), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002), Brandth and Kvande (2003), Hagemann (2003).

<sup>619</sup> Cf. Skar (1990), Aamodt (1990a, 1990b), Svenneby (1992), Skjeie (1992, 1998, 1999, 2004), Hagemann and Krogstad (1994), Johanessen (1994), Iversen (1995, 1996), Leira (1996), Melby (1996, 1997), Haavind (1998), Rasmussen (1999), Helle-Valle and Talle (2000), Haukanes (2001), Hennem (2001), Aslaksen (2000/2001), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

<sup>620</sup> Cf. Nagel (1998), Raaum (1998), Ellingsæter (1999a), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

<sup>621</sup> Cf. Leira (1996), Skjeie and Siim (2000).

<sup>622</sup> Cf. Larsen (1997), Blom (1998).

on the implications of The European Convention of Human Rights and of the United Nation's Women's Convention.<sup>623</sup>

Individualism is, however, also given other interpretations: Defending modern individualism might be equated with defending instrumental rationality, egoism, capitalism, or an abstract notion of the subject.<sup>624</sup> These different meanings attached to modern individualism are not always distinguished. To the contrary, it is very often presented as a multi-faceted cluster of supposedly interrelated ideas referred to as individualist and positioned in opposition to collectivism.

Also collectivism has some different distinguishable meanings. In the article referred to above, Telste conceptualizes the conflict as one between individualism and recognizing the authority and responsibility of collectives, not only of individuals. Modern individualization tends to focus exclusively on the authority and responsibility of the individual: "Moral questions are being privatized as principles of conduct are made a question of what each can decide" – and not a question of what people "can decide" collectively or of the direction taken by "the sanctions of the community" (1999: 60). This view is shared by Ann Nilsen, who contrasts modern "private" problem-solving with a vision where "women" – and not each and every woman as a private person – are given a voice on the basis of the "opinions" they "share", "dilemmas" they face, and "values" they consider it "worth making efforts for", and of the possibility of finding collective solutions that are not "private", but "intrinsically public and system based" (1992: 239, 240).<sup>625</sup> A somewhat different expression of this view, is Karin Widerberg's argument in favor of group representation in science: "[...] different groups and positions need to be represented in the scientific community for objectivity to be guaranteed", she maintains (1995: 164).<sup>626</sup>

However, Telste also talks about a rather different conflict between modern individualism and collectivism: one between individualism and the idea that individuals think about what is

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<sup>623</sup> Cf. Grannes (1994), Haugestad (1995), Ketcher (2001), Skjeie (2004).

<sup>624</sup> Consider the short systematic overview in 5.4.4 on the relationship between the critique of modern individualism and other arguments critical of modernity.

<sup>625</sup> "Is it reasonable to assume that these women's views are representative of women in general? Even if they are not, and my empirical material is biased in terms of social background, education and levels of occupation, it may still be assumed that a large number of women in our society share the opinions of these women as to the dilemmas faced and values worth making efforts for" (Nilsen 1992: 239).

<sup>626</sup> Because people who belong to different groups see different "questions" as "relevant" (Widerberg 1995: 164). See fuller elaboration in 5.4.5.

good for the group they belong to; orient themselves towards “collective values”, such as “the values anchored in the concept of honor” in the pre-individualized world in which the seducer Borgenstjerne operated (op.cit.: 60, 62). Many contributors commit themselves to an ethical collectivism that is considered to conflict, severely or more modestly, with modern individualism.<sup>627</sup> Kari Wærness defends, for example, an ethic of “caring” for others, a “feminine” ethos in “the traditional sense: based on sensitivity, reciprocity, intersubjective relations and responsibility – ‘the voice of the mother’”<sup>628</sup> (1990: 35). This approach is contrasted to moral approaches focused on “principles”:

An access to morality through principles [...] results in strife and war, because people will stick to their principles and defend them. Principles that are to be strictly followed create distance between people. Universalization of rules and principles [...] [should be rejected], because situations are never so similar that they can be completely governed by the same principles. Instead it is *the attitude of care* that [...] is universal and accessible to all humans when it comes to analyzing what it implies to approach another human morally (original emphasis, *ibid.*).

Sociologist Else Skjønberg’s point of departure is “a critique of the market-economic, mechanical and binary thinking, on which our dominant economic and scientific paradigm or understanding of reality is based” (1995: 13). This understanding of reality rewards, she says, “self-interest, individualism, power and competition”, “values” that are not in “the interest of community” (*ibid.*). However,

[...] parallel to the mechanical, hierarchical worldview and the technical/instrumental rationality that defines the individual as self-made and private consumption as the ultimate end, runs a strong undertow of a totally different way of thinking and acting [...] [that] is influenced by common interests, consideration of others, cooperation, responsibility and reciprocity (*ibid.*).

Also contributors inspired by poststructuralist theory, French feminism and Lacanian psychoanalysis argue against liberal individualism, for solidarity and collectivity. In an article on Luce Irigaray, geographer Inger J. Birkeland recommends, for example, an “ethics of sexual difference” prescribing “responsibility for the other”, with the exercise of “motherhood” as model (2000: 211). The “ethics” is introduced as a contrast to “equality feminism” and liberal gender neutrality that conceptualizes “human rights” without taking “the differences between women and men” into account (op.cit.: 191, 192, 211).

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<sup>627</sup> For more elaboration of collectively oriented ethical proposals, see in particular 5.4.12.

<sup>628</sup> She paraphrases the American philosopher Nel Noddings in *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*.

In other contributions, the lack of collectivity is conceptualized in yet a different way. The focus here is on the flaws of individualist notions of justice which ignore the group-level implications of social arrangements, in contrast to collectivist notions of justice which assume that groups, not only individuals, owe something to each other.<sup>629</sup> The conflict is articulated in discussions about social redistribution. Mari Teigen argues, for example, that a just society secures “equality of outcome”, meaning “equality in distribution on the group level” of “power, influence and resources”, not only equality of opportunity among individuals (2004: 86, 87).<sup>630</sup> The concern is also raised in discussions about cultural recognition however, as argued by Christine M. Jacobsen and Randi E. Gressgård:

In contrast to [Will] Kymlicka<sup>631</sup>, who sees groups as significant first and foremost for developing individual autonomy, [Iris Marion] Young<sup>632</sup> considers individual and group as intimately interconnected, that is, they constitute one another mutually. Considered in this way, culturally based group rights are not oppressive as such [...]. Group rights can, on the contrary, be an efficient means to achieve justice, for oppressed groups in particular (2002: 214).

The contributors may have different kinds of collectives in mind when they oppose modern individualism and collectivism. Telste elaborates the conflict between individualism and the ethos of “traditional” communities (1999: 43).<sup>633</sup> Others refer to the conflict between individualism and sustaining family relations. Philosopher Sidsel Aamodt explicates the conflict as discussed by Hegel:

The relationships within the family are, in virtue of being relationships between *family members*, universal or ethical in themselves; the ethical having to do with the relationship of the single family member to the whole family as a substance. The family as natural ethical life is therefore not to be fully understood as relationships of love and affection between *single individuals*. In Hegel’s opinion this would make their actions accidental and not substantial. To act as family member implies, then, obeying laws and customs without questioning them, so that the ethical frame of mind in the family is piety to the family spirit, or to the family gods (original emphasis, 1994b: 139).<sup>634</sup>

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<sup>629</sup> See also the elaboration of Brita M. Gulli’s argument on this point in 5.4.10.

<sup>630</sup> See also Mundal (1994), Kaul (1998), Rogg (1991, 2001), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

<sup>631</sup> They refer to Will Kymlicka’s *Multicultural Citizenship. A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*.

<sup>632</sup> They refer to her *Justice and the Politics of Difference*.

<sup>633</sup> See also Melby (1997), Kollhøj (1999), Mellemsæther (1999).

<sup>634</sup> Aamodt questions Hegel’s prescriptions for dealing with the conflict between modern individualism and family life, but subscribes to the idea that there is a conflict. For other elaborations of this conflict, see Stang Dahl (1992), Wærness (1998b), Sverdrup (2000).

There are, moreover, authors, such as Inger J. Birkeland, who emphasize the conflict between individualism and the ethical qualities of the mother-child relationship.<sup>635</sup> Social anthropologists Siri Gerrard and Halldis Valestrand (1999a, 1999b) accentuate the significance of sustaining local communities,<sup>636</sup> others accentuate, like Jacobsen and Gressgård, the need to recognize ethnic group ties.<sup>637</sup> Several commentators are concerned with the conflict between modern individualization and globalization and sustaining national communal ties, for example in discussions assuming a relationship between national solidarity and the development of welfare states.<sup>638</sup> The conflict might, however, also be elaborated as one between individualism and global solidarity.<sup>639</sup> In addition, there are contributions that defend republican ideas of active citizens participating in a political community. Such ideas are introduced as alternatives to liberal individualism and privatism, and occur, for example, in analyses of Scandinavian social democracy,<sup>640</sup> in contributions that reflect on the feminist relevance of Hannah Arendt,<sup>641</sup> but also in works inspired by poststructuralist theory<sup>642</sup> on how to make democracy more inclusive and citizens more active. Finally, modern individualism is often considered to conflict with recognizing the values of female communities and practices, whether one has in mind women's communities generally,<sup>643</sup> or particular feminine communities, such as the women's movement,<sup>644</sup> women's organizations<sup>645</sup> or female-dominated professions.<sup>646</sup>

As the quotations above indicate, elaborations of the conflict between modern individualism and collectivism very often conclude with statements about the need to make modern thought more collectivist, or to replace it with a wholly different outlook. Contributors seldom present the conflict in neutral terms, or end up by defending original articulations of modern individualism against collectivist challenges. Thus, when Gro Hagemann asks whether "feminism" contains "the potential to transcend the limits of liberalism with regard to the lack

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<sup>635</sup> Cf. Oftedal Telhaug (1992), Barth (1996).

<sup>636</sup> See also Nørve (1995), Fredriksen (1997), Fyhn (1997, 1999), Engelskjøn (1999).

<sup>637</sup> Cf. Borchgrevink (1999), Talle (2001), Thorbjørnsrud (2003), Berg (2004).

<sup>638</sup> Cf. Leira (1998), Skjeie and Siim (2000), Skjeie and Teigen (2003).

<sup>639</sup> Cf. Wærness (2001), Sørensen (1999), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002).

<sup>640</sup> I focus on these analyses in Chapter 6.

<sup>641</sup> Cf. Brandser (2002), Erichsen (2002), Nicolaysen (2002).

<sup>642</sup> Consider the many contributions inspired by Donna Haraway's radical-democratic ideas, such as Asdal, Brenna, Gulbrandsen, Moser and Refseth (1993), Asdal and Brenna (1998), Indahl (1998), Lotherington and Markussen (1999), Egeland (2001, 2003).

<sup>643</sup> Cf. Halse (1992), L'orange Fürst (1995), Widerberg (1995), Sümer (1998).

<sup>644</sup> Cf. Halsaa (1995, 2003), Østerud, Engelstad and Selle (2003).

<sup>645</sup> Cf. Selle and Berven (2001), Wollebæk and Selle (2001).

<sup>646</sup> Cf. Christensen (1997), Martinsen (1997), Skilbrei (2002).

of moral commitment towards a community“ (1997: 27), her framing of the question is very typical.<sup>647</sup> The general opinion in several of the contributions is indeed on the side of collectivism. The problem of liberal jurisprudence, professor in criminology Thomas Mathiesen argues, is that it lacks “care” and the “solidaric, holistic understanding of human beings” that women bring with them: Law needs to be “socialized” by women (2000: 114). Scholar in theology, Åse Røthing, wants to replace ethical models that stress “rationality and impartiality” with “ethical imperatives” based on “understanding and solidarity” (2000: 92, 93). And to return to some of the examples given above: Widerberg argues for giving groups authority and responsibility; Wærness argues that care ethics should replace the modern yardstick of justice, thus subscribing to Nel Noddings’ program; Teigen wants groups to replace individuals as the primary normative units in our thinking on social redistribution; Jacobsen and Gressgård introduce Iris Marion Young’s theory on the relationship between cultural recognition and recognition of groups, as a critique against Will Kymlicka’s position that recognition of groups is legitimate only in as far as it facilitates the individual’s exercise of autonomy. The general opinion is, in short, that the modern imaginary is too individualist.

Related to this view, is another point Telste accentuates in her analysis of seduction: That to stress community and solidarity is particularly valuable for women’s emancipation. The point is not only, as Hagemann frames it in her question, that feminism has collectivist resources to offer critics of modern individualism. The point is also that collectivist motivations of care and responsibility, found for example in the practice of mothering elaborated by Wærness and Birkeland, in Karin Widerberg’s “room of women” (1995: 65), have something of significance to offer feminism. The point is that collective agents, such as the women’s movement or “women’s public space” (de Vibe 1994: 77), are crucial if women’s interests are to be pursued, while collectivist notions of justice are necessary, as Teigen argues, if we are to defend affirmative action for women, and also necessary, as Jacobsen and Gressgård argue, if we are to defend non-Western women’s right to live according to their own conception of the good life.

The third claim made in Telste’s argument upon which I wish to focus here – that a collectivist orientation is about appreciating ‘collective values’ – is significant because it

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<sup>647</sup> For a similar framing of the question see for example Slagstad (1994, 1996), Christie Mathiesen (1998), Schmidt (1999). My point here is this: It would be very untypical to raise the concern that feminism may be conflicting with liberal ideas about commitment towards the individual.



reflects a demand for an ethical notion of the collective. People in Telste's traditional community shared a cultural outlook, a worldview, traditions and practices. They were bound together by common values seldom questioned. Telste contrasts this notion of community with modern society, which is not a community according to such demanding criteria: People are bound together by law and "abstract" norms and "principles of conduct" that "each can decide in accordance with their own conscience and perspective" (1999: 60). They can "no longer receive support from institutionalized norms of action in deciding what [...] [is] right and wrong," but have to make "moral deliberations" which "often take as their point of departure existing practices and customs, but open up the possibility for questioning them, accepting, dismissing or choosing between them" (1999: 60). The distinction between these two types of social order is found in many contributions, i.e. the distinction between ethical communities where we meet one another as concrete persons, and the loose modern order where our ties are abstract and impersonal. The theology scholar Ulla Schmidt elaborates it as follows:

[According to] the perspective of justice [...] [the] basis of morality is primarily linked to individuals who are isolated from one another at the outset, [and] choose to enter into contracts that imply obligations towards others and rights that they can claim. Fundamentally, individuals are therefore *free* and create [...] for themselves the rights and obligations that are laid upon them. These rights and obligations are universal and impartial, as they are based on a mutual contract. Therefore, they cannot discriminate against certain individuals or groups on the basis of specific considerations.<sup>648</sup> The perspective of care represents a basically different way of conceiving of morality and the ethical individual. From within this perspective, one considers interpersonal relationships and the concrete context in which the individual is enclosed to be essential for moral understanding, which is linked to certain understandings of how human life unfolds. From the point of view of this understanding, individuals are not primarily free and independent, but *dependent* and *interwoven in relations* (original emphasis, 1999: 66-67).

It is this ethical community, the social order based on Schmidt's "care perspective", which some contributors consider to be suppressed by modern individualism; it is this "other voice" that needs to be heard when the moderns have had their say (op.cit.: 66). This is needed not only because the other voice is valuable in itself, but also because all abstract social orders need to be based on concrete collectives, so that solidarity and "intimacy" do not disintegrate (Solheim 1998: 95). Jorun Solheim establishes this connection in the following way:

The time of Enlightenment is therefore also a time of cultural *disintegration* [...]. God is dead, human beings are free and unbounded, cast out into the empty air. In such times, [...] it

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<sup>648</sup> See 5.4.9 for further discussion of the latter point.

is logical that first-order (moral)philosophical questions tend to center around new *integrative mechanisms* – which hold a society of atomized individuals together, and hinder disruption and extermination. The modern social order builds its basic notions of integration on ideas of contract and voluntariness [...] [that] depend on the idea of ‘the invisible’ third – the integrating meta-level above the interacting individuals: the invisible hand of the market, the discursive community (parliament), the general will and the sovereignty of Leviathan. [...] But there is also another underlying level of integration, where ‘intimacy’ takes on a new shape as a bodily/symbolic integrative mechanism. We are dealing here with what we might call a *structural inversion*, where the ‘corporal’ connection of the family is gradually replacing patriarchy as the symbolic integrative mechanism, [and] [...] [a] new ideal of femininity, the loving, all-embracing mother-woman, [...] is raised symbolically to the social (not to mention the cosmological) level, as a general [...] notion of totality. At the same time this modern female ideal of intimacy works indirectly as a social integration principle, by its being linked to a conception of *Bildung*. Female intimacy is to improve the man, nurture him and cultivate him (original emphasis, 1998: 94-95).

Solheim is indeed critical of the gendered organization of this ‘intimacy’ so fundamental to the modern order. She considers, however, an “underlying level of integration” of this intimate kind to be necessary in order to uphold such an order (op.cit: 94). The task for feminists is to “de-gender” intimacy, not to struggle against intimacy as such (op.cit.: 99).

Whether individualism lies at the heart of the project of modernity is really not a topic for debate among the contributors. Given their discourse, it would not make sense to claim, simply, that this project is too collectivist or needs to be made more individualist. What is disputed, however, is what kind of individualism is fundamental to the project of modernity. It is a long way from professor in theology Kari Elisabeth Børresen’s definition of “democracy and human rights” as the core of “modern feminism” (1998: 221, 233), to Kari Martinsen’s (1997) harsh attack on the citizen of political liberalism and the calculating actor of economic liberalism, as the two agents of an individualist lifeform that encourages egoism, narcissism and instrumentalism.<sup>649</sup> Some authors also connect modern individualism closely to the way in which it is elaborated in classical liberalism, as individual “natural rights” (Raaum 1995: 21).<sup>650</sup> Others accentuate more recent elaborations. Edle Bugge Tenden takes, for example, John Rawls’ notion of “self-respect” as a “primary good” as her point of departure (2002: 167),<sup>651</sup> while professor in pedagogy Karen Jensen elaborates the “dialogical” individualism of Jürgen Habermas (1990: 17).

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<sup>649</sup> See also 5.4.11 and 5.4.12.

<sup>650</sup> See 5.4.2.

<sup>651</sup> She relies in particular on Drucilla Cornell’s feminist interpretation of Rawls in *The Imaginary Domain and At the Heart of Freedom*.

Somewhat disputed is also the hegemonic presupposition that modern individualism necessarily conflicts with collectivism. Philosopher Kjersti Fjørtoft argues against those who consider “care” and “justice” to be incompatible perspectives (2002: 42):

[...] [I] will argue that both perspectives need to be integrated into a dialogical model. We need normative and institutional arrangements that will secure equal justice for all, but such arrangements also need to be confronted with the needs, interpretations and interests of the concrete human beings concerned (ibid.).

Fjørtoft’s dialogical model is based on Habermas’ idea of “democratic discourse”, Seyla Benhabib’s reflections on the relationship between the generalized and the concrete other in moral theory, and on Iris Marion Young’s definition of “autonomy” as “the possibility to look at oneself as participant in democratic practices” (op.cit.: 43, 46, 49-50). Mari Teigen interprets Martha Nussbaum’ feminist liberalism and Nancy Fraser’s normative ideas of deliberative democracy and “parity in participation” to be compatible with a perspective where groups are considered the primary normative units (2004: 92).

Several authors admit, moreover, that modern individualism has made possible crucial gains. Individualist ideas have played a crucial role for example in struggles for emancipation, women’s struggles and other oppressed groups’ struggles to have their “human worth” and “human rights” confirmed (Moxnes 1999: 4).<sup>652</sup>

Freedom is a basic notion in the natural rights tradition. [...] In women’s law focus has been in particular on the protection of *individual* freedom [...]. The negation of freedom is force, necessity and dependence. Women’s law has worked to reveal to what extent women are exposed to infringement against their freedom in their daily lives. Protection of values such as dignity and integrity are essential in this connection, and are the basis of autonomy and self-realization (original emphasis, Wesenberg 1995).

Indeed, general statements about what feminism is are made very often in the language of modern individualism, even if this reliance is not always explicitly recognized. For example, the vocabulary of rights is used not only by confessed liberals. Beatrice Halsaa, who defends a radical-socialist feminism,<sup>653</sup> defines feminism in the following way:

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<sup>652</sup> There are several explicit appreciations of modern individualism that take the form, for example, of general statements about the importance of human rights, even if such appreciations are often made with significant reservations, see for example 5.4.4.

<sup>653</sup> See 5.4.11.

What do we mean when we talk about feminism? I take as my point of departure that the struggle for women's rights has always had two sides to it; one ideological, theoretical and intellectual, and the other more practical, action-oriented and political (1996: 142).

Moreover, some accentuate, in fact, the relative lack of individualism when key thinkers of modernity write about issues with particular relevance to women's freedom and equality. Consider, for example, the critique of Rawls' view that his individualist principles of justice should not apply to the family.<sup>654</sup> Consider also the critique of liberals that do not defend the implementation of women's human rights in religious organizations.<sup>655</sup> Finally, the collectivist thought suggested as adequate for modifying or replacing modern individualism are also criticized. Some criticize, for example, feminist care ethic proposals, either because they are oppressive to women, in the sense that they tend to reproduce what are considered patriarchal stereotypes of women,<sup>656</sup> because they idealize women's culture, and contribute to making men and their practices essentially less ideal than women and their practices,<sup>657</sup> or because they prescribe a conception of the good care-ethical life for all, and disregard the fact that people, both men and women, might have other plans for their self-realization, which they should also be allowed to pursue in a just society.<sup>658</sup> Not many investigate critically the idea of making groups the primary normative unit.<sup>659</sup> But there are a few. Edle Bugge Tenden argues, for example, that feminist jurisprudence should not have "women's perspective", but the individual's "right to freedom" as its critical yardstick (2002: 164):

To include women's perspective (as something different from men's perspective) in law implies that we accept at least implicitly, certain kinds of behavior as given. [Drucilla] Cornell<sup>660</sup> will not, however, deny that inequalities in power between women and men are present in real life. Her point is that such descriptions of reality – descriptions of the gender power relationships that feminists wish to change – should not be written into law as a premise. We might then end up with a law that cements inequalities instead of abolishing them. Cornell tries, in line with this argument, to deduce a concept of equality and a right to freedom from sexual harassment that can be justified independent of women's perspective (ibid.).

Moreover, many point out that there are certain kinds of collectives that need to be deconstructed and reshaped, and perhaps replaced, i.e. collectives that are not worth

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<sup>654</sup> Cf. Bojer (2001), Fjørtoft (2002), Holst (2002b).

<sup>655</sup> Cf. Børresen (1995b, 1998), Ketcher (2001), Skjeie (2004).

<sup>656</sup> Cf. Davidsen, Solli and Waaler (1996), Andenæs (1998), Solheim (1998).

<sup>657</sup> Cf. Aarseth (1995), Oftung (1995, 1997), Øvrelid (1996b, 2000), Slottemo (2000).

<sup>658</sup> Cf. Raaum (1995), Holst (2003).

<sup>659</sup> See, however, Chapter 8.

<sup>660</sup> Bugge Tenden is inspired by the arguments of John Rawls and Amartya Sen in addition to Drucilla Cornell.

defending, even if other collectives are. There is, for example, the critique of national or religious myths which are considered to reproduce gender stereotypes that suppress individual and cultural variations among women and men.<sup>661</sup> Critique is also raised against over-idealized descriptions, for example of the women's movement,<sup>662</sup> of the practice of mothering,<sup>663</sup> and of traditional communities<sup>664</sup> i.e. descriptions that underestimate what may be oppressive facets of these collectives.

The definition of collectives as ethical communities where people share values and worldviews, as it for example is advanced in Telste's article, is also addressed critically. Some contributors emphasize, for example, the significance of the collective orientation of the modern social order; its attempt to combine solidarity with respect for pluralism. Consider, for example, how sociologist Karen Christensen reflects on the normative basis of the welfare state:

The welfare state thus relates to citizens as single individuals, and it should modify [...] market forces [...] on the basis of ideological ideas of equality, equal worth, justice and rights. [...] we see a movement from a state that helps the poor to a state that provides basic security for all citizens. Welfare in the context of the welfare state does [...] not really refer to happiness, but is about creating a minimum standard for all (1997: 2).<sup>665</sup>

And, finally, some critics consider even the modern notion of a morality to be too comprehensive. This point is sometimes framed as immanent critique: Key contributors to the modern canon have elaborated morality so that a more or less articulated ethical subtext remains, one which privileges men's perspectives above women's perspectives, it is argued.<sup>666</sup> This line of critique is, however, also prevalent in contributions inspired by poststructuralist theory. Drawing on Michel Foucault's notion of discourse, Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophy of nihilism and Hannah Arendt's reflections on goodness, political scientist Jill Loga analyzes both Aristotelian and Kantian approaches to morality in Norwegian public debates as expressions of "the power of goodness in the political sphere" (2002: 32):<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>661</sup> Cf. L'orange Fürst (1995), Flaskerud (1999), Skjeie and Siim (2000), Andersen (2002).

<sup>662</sup> Cf. Gullvåg Holter (1993), Gentikow (1998), Blom (2003).

<sup>663</sup> Cf. Bjerrum Nielsen (1996), Birkeland (2000), Kvande and Rasmussen (2003).

<sup>664</sup> Cf. Skar (1990), Børresen (1995a), Øverland (1996).

<sup>665</sup> For similar reflections, see for example Raaum and Skogerbø (1993), Moxnes (1999), Svenneby (1999a).

<sup>666</sup> Consider the discussion of the problem of false universalism in 5.4.7.

<sup>667</sup> See also Meyer (1999) and Egeland (2004a). Consider again also 5.4.7, and the critique of modern universalism as unachievable and undesirable.

[...] the discourse [of goodness] attempts to become legitimate by referring to moral philosophy and ethics, by, for example, accentuating the Aristotelian virtues [...] [or] the categorical imperative [...]. The discourse thus ‘invites’ certain moral philosophers into the discourse, or it gives legitimacy to certain philosophers (op.cit.: 38).

The problem, according to Loga, is not that the thinkers of modernity do not care about sustaining communities based on common values. The problem is rather that they, along with other thinkers, defend a social order based on certain values considered to be “good”, at the expense of other values, which are labeled “destructive, oppressive and evil” (op.cit.: 32).

### **5.4.9 Equality and power**

In her analysis of Norwegian gender equality policies during the 1970s, entitled *Moderskapets frigjørelse?*,<sup>668</sup> social scientist Brita Gulli introduces two notions of equality, the social-liberal emphasizing “equal treatment” and the feminist emphasizing “redistribution” (1992: 9). She defends the latter (op.cit.: 21).

Social liberalism is the more “social” inheritor of liberalism (op.cit.: 11). The basic idea of liberalism is that all individuals have certain natural rights, “despite social differences and ties”, and previous to the establishment of political government (ibid.). These natural “civil rights”, consisting of the right to private property and the right to contract, were to be secured, liberals argued, by the establishment of a “political authority” based on “consent” (ibid.). “Thus classical liberalism contained important ideas of individual autonomy” and “democratic government”, Gulli notes (ibid.). Basically, however, liberalism should be understood as the articulation of legal preconditions for the development of the market economy:<sup>669</sup> All were to be “treated equally” and “neutrally” as owners and contractors (ibid.). The aim was “equality in competition” (ibid.). That is, all men, not women, were equal in this sense. Women, without natural rights, were positioned by liberals in the private sphere under the rule of men, i.e. under “patriarchal authority” (op.cit.: 12).<sup>670</sup> This has characterized, Gulli adds, the liberal tradition ever since. The state was not to intervene in private markets or in the private sphere of marriage and family.

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<sup>668</sup> *The Emancipation of Motherhood.*

<sup>669</sup> See 5.4.11.

<sup>670</sup> See 5.4.10.

Compared to liberalism, the more “equality-oriented” social liberalism puts more emphasis on giving individuals “equal opportunities, equal access to resources” (op.cit.: 13). The idea is that “equal legal rights” are a “necessary, but not sufficient” precondition for equality (ibid.). Also “substantial reforms aiming at equal opportunities” are needed (ibid.). Social liberals recognize that there are differences between groups in society, also between women and men, but they do not regard these differences as the result of differences in power. Hence, substantial reforms are introduced, as “an offer to individuals” of which they can “choose” to make use (op.cit.: 14). The point is to create “equal *access* to resources”, so that individuals can have “real equal opportunities” in order to “compete” among themselves (original emphasis, ibid.). However, this is not “necessarily” a prescription for “redistribution” (op.cit.: 15). All are to be given equal opportunities up to a certain level – the base-line level that makes real their formal freedom to compete on equal terms – but this might still be compatible with significant “relative” inequalities between groups, for example between women and men (ibid.). Gulli mentions in this connection John Rawls’ difference principle distribution: Only those inequalities are acceptable that are “to the advantage of the worst-off” (op.cit.: 14). This principle does not preclude the possibility that such inequalities may be even more to the advantage of the better-off, she argues

In line with “a more egalitarian tradition in political theory”, feminists have emphasized redistribution in order to reduce relative inequalities, and aimed at an “equality of outcome” (op.cit.: 15). Their point of departure is that there are inequalities in resources between women and men – and between other groups in society – as a result of systematic inequalities in power: Men have not only “more” power than women, they have also power “over” women (ibid.). Even if there are differences and power inequalities among women, women are not in the “same position” as men, and are positioned as men’s “subordinates”, due to the gendered organization of labor and the unpaid work of the household, and because of patriarchal relations that shape sexuality and biological reproduction (ibid.). Thus, men’s and women’s situations are considered to be fundamentally unequal.<sup>671</sup> For men and women to be equal, redistribution of “money”, “work” and “power” is necessary, to secure equality of outcome (op.cit.: 17). Equality of outcome requires “differentiated treatment” of groups, not equal

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<sup>671</sup> Consider the discussion in 5.4.7 on general descriptions of women’s situation.

treatment, because groups are on an unequal footing from the outset (ibid.).<sup>672</sup> “Equal treatment of women and men based on gender neutrality as a principle, irrespective of actual differences, will only reproduce inequalities”; the principle of gender neutrality is an expression of “patriarchal ideology”, and not a tool in the struggle against patriarchy (op.cit.: 18). Very often there will be “conflicts of distribution” between groups, “a zero-sum game”: Whereas social liberals search for policies that will be “in the interest of all”, feminists recognize that policies most often serve the interests of one group to the disadvantage of another (op.cit.: 14, 17). Also, the ultimate feminist aim is not the social liberal in the sense that women and men are to become similar or even “the same” (op.cit.: 17). Women are to become “autonomous”; feminists struggle for women to “emancipate” themselves on their own terms (op.cit.: 16). And emancipation in this sense requires, Gulli argues, material redistribution in order to achieve equality of outcome, but also critique of cultural “barriers” that limit women’s participation in public life, and a dismissal of the public-private distinction defended by liberals and social liberals alike: Market relations, family life and personal relations are not private and non-political, but matters for public political debate and decision-making.<sup>673</sup>

There are several identifiable claims in this argument. I will deal with three of them in this paragraph.<sup>674</sup>

i) Gulli associates liberal equality with a regime of equal treatment incompatible with the kind of differentiated treatment necessary for achieving, for example, equality between women and men: Women and men cannot be treated equally, since their position in society is unequal. Rather, they need to be treated differently in order to become equal. This is something liberals not at all, or only inadequately, allow for. Several contributors make similar remarks. Jane Elizabeth Wesenberg brings attention to this point, when she contrasts liberal rules of equal treatment with the goal of “actual equal treatment and equality between women and men” (1995: 19)

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<sup>672</sup> Consider 5.4.8 for the discussion on whether the individual or the group is the primary normative unit. Gulli seems to be somewhat ambivalent on this point. On the one hand, she defends an individualist principle of autonomy, on the other hand she defends equality of outcome between groups.

<sup>673</sup> See 5.4.10.

<sup>674</sup> Some are dealt with elsewhere. The argument that justice implies equality on group-level, not simply equality among individuals is discussed in 5.4.8. The argument that the liberal idea of equality prescribes normalizing ideas of sameness, and represses individual and cultural differences, is dealt with in 5.4.7. The relationship between feminism and critique of capitalism is explicitly addressed in 5.4.11.



[...] formal equality before the law gives no guarantees against discrimination in practice. It is not automatically the case that rules of equal treatment and equality materialize in actual equal treatment and equality between women and men, be it individually or collectively (ibid.).<sup>675</sup>

Or, as Ann Therese Lotherington puts it: “We do not see the inequality, because all (abstract) individuals are to be regarded as equal and treated equally” (1999: 185).<sup>676</sup>

A few stress, however, the moral significance of the equal treatment principle, i.e. to treat equal cases equally is, it is argued, fundamentally just. In a passage critical of feminist care ethics, Nina Raaum notes, for example:

Last but not least; politics may perhaps be in need of more solidarity and cooperation, but that does not mean that ethical ideals of care are desirable in all connections. While appreciating equal treatment and the rule of law, this author at least would become frightened if *too* much care and informal networks were to rule out formal rules and hierarchies (original emphasis, 1995: 37).<sup>677</sup>

Others maintain that liberal equality cannot be reduced to a doctrine of equal treatment, and that this doctrine, interpreted in the wider context of liberal egalitarianism, is consistent with policies for differentiated treatment. Mari Teigen maintains, for example, that “individualism and not a principle of equal treatment [...] is fundamental for the liberal position” as explicated by Ronald Dworkin, and that “individualism”, interpreted as “the right to be treated as equal to and with the same respect as others”, very often requires differentiated treatment such as affirmative action arrangements (2000: 72). Another example is law scholar Else Anette Grannes who in an analysis of the United Nations Womens’ Convention argues that “human rights norms” of treating everyone equally qua humans, i.e. as having “equal rights”, is compatible with “temporary special measures” for a particular group, such as women, and necessary to achieve “real equal status” for the members of this group (1995: 34, 35).

ii) Gulli argues that liberals defend an indefensible norm of equal opportunities, which is compatible with huge relative inequalities in power and resources, and in conflict with granting everyone equality of outcome; trying to ensure that all members of society, in the

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<sup>675</sup> She refers to Tove Stang Dahl. In a work originally published before 1990, Stang Dahl puts it this way: “By subscribing to [...] positive discrimination of women to achieve real equality, many women come into conflict with the liberal ideology of equal treatment” (re-published in Stang Dahl 1994a: 30-31).

<sup>676</sup> See also for example Gaarder (1990), Gulbrandsen (1995), Moser (1998), Ellingsæter (1999b), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002).

<sup>677</sup> For similar reflections see Holst (2002b).

end, get a more or less equal share of power and resources. This argument is very often the subtext of contributions influenced by Marxism or by radical-feminist theories of patriarchy,<sup>678</sup> but few elaborate it as thoroughly as Gulli does. One who does so is, once more, Mari Teigen, who links her argument for certain policies of affirmative action to the Norwegian sociologist Gudmund Hernes' notion of "equality of outcome", a notion different from notions of "equal treatment" and "equal worth" defended by liberals (2003: 16, 17):

Gudmund Hernes' notion of equality of outcome comes close to an ideal of equal sharing. Equality of outcome is based on an idea of justice that dismisses socially determined distributions. The focus is more on [...] implications than on [...] procedures. Lack of gender balance becomes then an indicator of [...] [in]justice, at the same time as gender balance becomes the aim of a just distribution. Justice is then not simply about counteracting discrimination, but about securing an equal distribution between women and men of attractive positions – of power, influence and status (op.cit.: 17).

There are authors who, at least implicitly, question the validity of ideas of equality of outcome that focus more on "implications" than on "procedures" (ibid.), as they adopt their notion of equality from theorists, such as John Rawls or Jürgen Habermas.<sup>679</sup> Several question, moreover, at least implicitly, that liberal equality is not concerned with outcome. Kirsten Ketcher argues, for example, that human rights thinking grants everyone an equal right to a set of "primary goods";<sup>680</sup> "that is, goods that are to secure each person a life in dignity and integrity with the possibility of self-development" (2001: 146): It grants everyone equality of outcome, of certain goods, on a certain level, as a condition for real equality of opportunity; for an equal "possibility of self-development" (ibid.).<sup>681</sup> There are, however, no contributions that criticize in detail the notion of equality of outcome as prescribed for instance by Gulli and Teigen.<sup>682</sup>

iii) Gulli argues that inequalities in power between women and men are so significant that to simply grant people "freedom of choice" as an "offer", as liberals would do, is inadequate (1992a: 14).<sup>683</sup> The structural and cultural power of men will make women choose ways of life that cause them to remain in a subordinate position, instead of ways of life that would

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<sup>678</sup> Cf. Gullvåg Holter (1997), Pettersen (1999), Sørhaug (2002).

<sup>679</sup> Cf. Fjørtoft (2002), Halvorsen (2002).

<sup>680</sup> Ketcher refers to Martha Nussbaum and John Rawls.

<sup>681</sup> See also for example Bojer (2001), Bugge Tenden (2002), Skjeie (2004).

<sup>682</sup> I return to this point in Chapter 8, however.

<sup>683</sup> To grant them equal opportunities, to be used in whatever way they choose (compatible with others' equal right to freedom of choice), i.e. the debate sketched in ii) is closely linked to the debate sketched here (in iii).

emancipate them. There are several contributors who argue that it is inadequate to subscribe to a norm of equal freedom of choice, at least under present conditions.<sup>684</sup> The underlying idea seems to be, however, that there might be social and cultural conditions – not shaped by illegitimate power as contemporary societies are – under which a norm of equal freedom of choice would be defensible. But what, more specifically, these conditions are, is seldom made explicit, even if general prescriptions are made, based for example on Marxist perspectives<sup>685</sup> or on a poststructuralist critique of contemporary culture as patriarchal and heterosexist.<sup>686</sup>

There are, however, counter-arguments articulated. Some authors argue that the thinking of modernity, generally speaking, does not prescribe a notion of equal freedom of choice under present conditions.<sup>687</sup> Others stress why it is crucial, from a moral point of view and from the perspective of how we gain adequate knowledge, to take seriously people's own points of view. This point is for instance highlighted in discussions on the value of qualitative methodology. Liv Emma Thorsen elaborates, for example, in a study of the cultural constructions of gender in everyday life, the need to achieve a "balance" between "solidarity with those interviewed", the duty of researchers to retell their ideas about themselves "from within", and "critical" distance from their "lifeworld" in qualitative "life course interviewing" (1993: 46, 47). Sociologist Tove Thagaard addresses directly and critically the idea that "women's choices" in modern Norway do not also reflect what they "feel like" choosing: Women's "motives" should not be considered as simple expressions of "male dominance" (1996: 29). Women might "fancy" being or be "more competent" than men when it comes to, for example, "looking after children", and thus have "their identity [confirmed] by doing it" (op.cit.: 29, 30), even if such choices also contribute to "a reproduction of a relationship of dominance between man and woman" (op.cit.: 30).

#### **5.4.10 The public and the private**

Brita Gulli criticizes liberals for considering the private sphere of family life and intimate relations as a non-political sphere. Feminists, on the other hand, have criticized the public-

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<sup>684</sup> See also Gaarder (1990), Benum (1992), Holter (1996), Ellingsæter (1999), Bolsø (2000), Haavind (1992, 1994, 2000).

<sup>685</sup> Cf. Holter (1996), von der Lippe (1999), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002).

<sup>686</sup> Cf. Eng and Markussen (2000), Mortensen (1999).

<sup>687</sup> This is how I read for example Skjeie and Teigen (2003) and Teigen (2004).

private distinction and struggled to make “issues that have traditionally been considered private” public and political (Gulli: 1992: 16). As noted by Kjersti Fjørtoft, feminists have generally tended to question the liberal distinction between the public and the private from two angles:

*Justice feminism* focuses on how the public-private distinction has contributed to exclude the family and the intimate sphere from the institutions of society that are to be assessed from the point of view of justice (equality, freedom and community). Justice feminists claim that a just society presupposes that relations within what was previously conceived of as the private sphere also need to be regulated by just norms. *Care feminism* on the other hand focuses on how the public-private distinction has contributed to underestimate and trivialize what have typically been women’s moral experiences. These are experiences connected with care work, reproduction and activities in the household. What characterizes moral experiences of this kind is in fact that they are based on sentiments, empathy, trust and care. Care feminists claim that relations of care have significant moral qualities, and that these qualities need to be recognized [...] (original emphasis, 2002: 24-25).

According to Fjørtoft, politicizing the private from a feminist point of view is about making oppressive (gender) relations in the private sphere a case for critical public scrutiny (‘justice feminism’) or about making private (female) virtues into public virtues (‘care feminism’). The critique of the public-private distinction put forward by the media scientist and cultural critic Wenche Mühleisen in the article “Feminisering, kjønn og sex i fjernsynsoffentligheten” (2000)<sup>688</sup> can be interpreted as a particular mixture of justice and care arguments.

Mühleisen argues that talk-shows on television, by including what has traditionally been coded as private, and thus as foreign to the public sphere, have contributed to “extending the notion of the public sphere” to “include essential aspects, topics and qualities” in ways that feminists should welcome (op.cit.: 19). This approach opposes the typical pessimistic stories of modern societies, such as the one told by Jürgen Habermas.<sup>689</sup> Habermas associates the rise of the mass media with “decline”, according to Mühleisen (op.cit.: 4). He refers critically to developments where distinctions between “state and society, the public and the private” have become blurred, as “re-feudalization” (op.cit.: 24). What contributes to re-feudalization is “the inclusion of so-called private sphere topics” and “private stories” in public debate (ibid.): This is “a threat against the ideal tasks of the public”, in Habermas’ view (ibid.).

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<sup>688</sup> “Feminization, Gender and Sex in the Public Sphere of Television”.

<sup>689</sup> She refers to his *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*. Similar stories of decline are told, Mühleisen argues, by Richard Senneth and Pierre Bourdieu.

To be sure, television talk-shows introduce “so-called private topics” to the public, Mühleisen observes (ibid.). To introduce such topics is, however, not essentially illegitimate. On the contrary, it might be a good thing if “the tabloid gossip” of the talk-shows were to transform “private secrets about child abuse or sexual abuse” into “public issues” (op.cit.: 10). Without the relations that belong to the private sphere being made public, they cannot, in Fjørtoft’s terms, be assessed from the perspective of ‘justice feminism’. “Lesbians and homosexuals” and other sexual minorities, culturally “stigmatized” groups, “freaks”, “losers”, who are “coming out”, telling their “private stories”, “confessing”, admitting”, might “correct” the “prejudices” of “the audience”, prejudices which, without correction, might cause injustice (op.cit.: 11, 12). Moreover, influential feminist positions can also contribute to reproducing sexual-cultural prejudices, if left unchallenged: “Nordic feminism”, embracing “the nuclear family”, emphasizing the relations between femininity and “motherhood”, and between sexuality and “conventional heterosexuality”, needs to be reminded of the variety in sexual practices and ways of life (ibid.). Also, in Nordic feminism, sexuality is often conceptualized in terms of the problems it causes for women; “its negative implications” (op.cit.: 12). However, without a language to describe sexuality as pleasure, also for women, feminists may contribute to reproducing the “old-fashioned bourgeois patriarchal morality” limiting women’s sexual freedom instead of challenging it, Mühleisen argues (ibid.). Thus, from the point of view of justice, there is good reason for feminists to approach “the excessive sex-talk of the talk-show” from a somewhat less “politically correct” perspective (ibid.).

Feminists to whom Fjørtoft refers as care feminists, want the public sphere to be influenced by sentiments; by affective qualities that characterize the female lifeworld. Mühleisen raises a similar concern, even if her focus is not on the feminine, ‘so-called private’ sphere as a sphere of care, but as a sphere of sexual, expressive bodies.<sup>690</sup> Once more, we talk of a concern not allowed for within the strict public-private parameters of the modern imaginary, in Mühleisen’s view: Habermas conceptualizes public discourse as “rational critical discourse”; the public is the space of reason, the “affective” is a quality of the private sphere (op.cit.: 4, 8). Making the public sphere more “intimate”, more influenced by the affective – more “feminine”, as critics often say, since they associate the affective with femininity (and the rational with masculinity) – is to facilitate the “decline” and “refeudalization” of the public sphere, would be Habermas’ point (op.cit.: 7). However, Mühleisen argues, he thereby

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<sup>690</sup> Consider also 5.4.13.

overlooks the importance of “emotionality” and “expressivity” in public deliberations (op.cit.: 5). Habermas’ notion of the ideal public conceals the fact that we think and behave as citizens as – more or less rational – embodied, affective, expressive beings: “Habermas’ denial of desire, subjectivity and affectivity” makes his “theory of communication”, “his understanding of the subject” – and indeed his normative notion of what is suitable in public – mistaken (ibid.).

It is common among the contributors, to target the distinction between private and public, whether explicitly and elaborately, or, as in most cases, briefly and without much discussion or modification. To question the private-public distinction is often identified as a “slogan” that unites feminists: “The personal is political” (Danielsen 2002: 93).<sup>691</sup> Mühleisen’s way of framing her questioning, as I have elaborated it above, is typical in the sense that it often involves critique from the perspective of justice feminism as well as from the perspective of care feminism in one and the same contribution,<sup>692</sup> even if the emphasis is mostly on one perspective rather than the other. There are many examples of critique of the private-public dichotomy associated with the modern imaginary expressing the concern for gender justice, in the material I have surveyed.<sup>693</sup> One example is Kari Melby’s outline, in her article on the historiography of women’s history in Norway:

On the one hand, many theses dealt with women’s organized activity: in unions, in the women’s rights movement and in other interest organizations. On the other hand, public debate on questions that concerned women in particular was analyzed: questions that concerned their position in working life, their rights as citizens, questions connected with women’s sexuality and reproduction, and education [...]. To define such inquiry as political history challenges however established definitions of political practice. It implies a definition of the political as more than what happens inside the political apparatus of power and in party politics. It implies understanding interest-based and union-based activity as political, also when women were actors, and to understand public debate about fundamental questions concerning the organization of society as political, also when it concerned regulation of the gender relationship (1996: 191).

Ann Therese Lotherington links her critique of the private-public divide, from a perspective of justice feminism, more explicitly to a criticism of liberal political philosophy:

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<sup>691</sup> See also Lie (1990), Taksdal (1992), Hagemann and Krogstad (1994), Widerberg (1994), Rogg (2001), Malterud (2002), Strand (2002), Lilleaas (2004), Paulson (2004).

<sup>692</sup> In the case of Mühleisen, there is more talk about ‘emotionality’ and ‘expressivity’ than ‘care’. The logic of her argument is, however, similar to the logic of those who question the private-public distinction from the perspective of care feminism.

<sup>693</sup> Consider for example Brita Gulli’s argument in 5.4.9 on this point.

The sharp distinction made by the classical contract theorists between the public and the private as well as their assessment of the private as politically irrelevant, has been on the feminist agenda for a long time. The struggle to make the private political; the slogan of second-wave feminism in the 1970's, also aimed to make visible the oppression of women in the family sphere (1999: 186).

Justice-based criticism of liberalism's private-public dichotomy, occurs also in readings that are less dismissive of liberalism than Lotherington's.<sup>694</sup> Anne-Hilde Nagel stresses, for example, the relevance of the feminist liberalism of Mary Wollstonecraft because it departs from conventional liberal thinking on this point:

She [Wollstonecraft] does not see the private as something lying outside the state, and calls for public regulation also in the private sphere. She does not, in other words, consider the right to privacy to be protected at any cost, but links rights also to family life at home, where wives should be protected by law against tyrannical husbands, and women should have the same right to dispose of their own property as men (1999: 139).

A critique of the private-public distinction with emphasis on the care-feminist perspective, is developed by Irene Iversen in her analysis of Jürgen Habermas' notion of the public sphere:<sup>695</sup>

When one re-reads Habermas' description of the preconditions for the development of the bourgeois public, it might seem as though he has forgotten one of his own premises: that the family [...] is the 'sphere for the intimate self-creation of humanity'. What he develops is a notion of *the human* abstracted from traditional privileges, as well as an abstraction of the bourgeois male ideal. But the citizen could be found exactly where the citizen, according to Habermas, is taught and trained to become a reflecting and responsible individual, in the intimate sphere (original emphasis, 1999a: 7).

Hence, there are, according to Iversen, values which have been silenced in the intimacy of the feminized private but which should be publicly recognized, because they are humanity's preconditions. Ulla Schmidt argues along similar lines when she asserts that feminist care ethics, in the tradition of Carol Gilligan, should correct, if not replace, the liberal understanding of public justice (1999: 67).<sup>696</sup>

In addition to reasoning of this kind, emphasizing justice or care, several contributors try showing their point; that personal stories may have public relevance, by telling stories from their private lives they consider to be relevant. One example are sociologists Berit Brandth

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<sup>694</sup> Cf. Bugge Tenden (2000), Bojer (2001).

<sup>695</sup> Note the differences between Iversen's and Mühleisen's critique of Habermas on this point, even if the logic of their argument is similar. Iversen's argument can be connected with the line of reasoning elaborated in 5.4.12, Mühleisen's concern is discussed more thoroughly in 5.4.13.

<sup>696</sup> For more examples see 5.4.12.

and Elin Kvande, who use their positive personal experiences of sharing responsibility for children with the children's fathers, to argue in favor of particular state-initiated policies towards the family, and for "including a children's and father's perspective, in addition to the perspective of gender equality, on the care work of fathers" (2003: 13). Another example is Monica Rudberg's (1996a, 1996b) use of personal experiences of being a woman, in her argument for a new feminist way of producing scientific knowledge.<sup>697</sup> Several commentators elaborate their personal history, the intellectual history of women's research and the feminist movement in Norway as being intimately intertwined.<sup>698</sup>

It is hard to find any contributions that elaborately and without reservation defend the distinction between private and public that is strongly associated with the thinking of modernity.<sup>699</sup> Several extend their criticism to include other intellectual traditions, however. Inadequate conceptions of the private-public distinction are a general problem, linked to the gendered, hierarchical dichotomies that have shaped Western culture and society. Within this scheme, everything which is associated with the masculine: reason, culture, spirit – the public and political – is rated above everything which is associated with the feminine, such as sentiments, nature, body – as well as the private and non-political.<sup>700</sup>

A few argue, however, that the inadequate private-public distinction can be transformed from within the modern imaginary itself: Prevalent ideas of what is public and private, political and non-political, need to be transformed if they are to become consistent with the standards of morality defended by the thinkers of modernity in other connections. This immanent critique is most often raised from the perspective of justice feminism, for example when commentators criticize John Rawls' approach to the family. Rawls is accused of writing as if the family should not be organized according to his principles of justice, even if he, in other passages, refers to the family as part of the "basic structure", and thus as an institution to be included in "the class of institutions to be regulated by his principles of justice" (Fjørtoft 2002: 29).<sup>701</sup> The immanent critique is, however, also raised from the perspective of care. Iversen's use of Habermas in the quotation above is one example: The values of the private

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<sup>697</sup> For an elaborated example see also the presentation of Karin Widerberg's *Kunnskapens kjønn* in 5.4.5.

<sup>698</sup> Cf. Bjerrum Nielsen (1999), Lie (1999), Halsaa (1999), Solheim (1999), Aas (1999).

<sup>699</sup> Raaum (1995) is, however, one example.

<sup>700</sup> See L'orange Fürst (1998), Sampson (1999), Songe-Møller (1999c), Wiestad (1999).

<sup>701</sup> See also Bojer (2001), Bugge Tenden (2002) and Holst (2002c).



sphere should be recognized as public values, since they are preconditions for reasonable, responsible performance in the bourgeois public sphere.<sup>702</sup>

Furthermore, there are contributors who stress the value of privacy,<sup>703</sup> even if this emphasis is not necessarily linked to a rehabilitation of the thinking of modernity. An original elaboration of the significance of privacy for feminism, is Tordis Borchgrevink's defense of women's right to inhabit "the fearful empty place" beyond the dichotomies of man/woman, male/female (1995: 131). A similarly minded proposal is Karin Widerberg's attempt to move beyond the gender dichotomy by revaluing the "object"<sup>704</sup> status given to those in our culture who do not find comfort in traditional femininity, or in being absorbed by phallogocentric logic (1990: 65). The right to privacy is also defended as a crucial civil right, by those who highlight the significance of modern individual rights, even if such defenses are seldom contrasted critically with the feminist slogan of making the personal political.<sup>705</sup> Some, though few, emphasize the limits to law- and policy-making, for example social scientist Dag Leonardsen who argues for limiting the "interfering, paternalistic state", and for focusing more on public deliberation and "action" in addressing "problem-definitions", "conflicts between different ends" and "rationalities" (1990: 56, 61).<sup>706</sup> Often when the limits of politics are recognized, they are, moreover, recognized with a subtext of regret, as when Anne Lise Ellingsæter and Jorun Solheim discuss the means of transforming the gendered power structures of work:

The framework of interpretation and categories of the social world arising from political debate, [...] shape what we regard as socially acceptable and desirable. In this way *the regulative state* is significant from the point of view of gender equality. The effects that formal regulations have when it comes to solving the problems identified, are, however, a different story. The relationship between political regulation and social practice is a topic that is increasingly debated, for example in feminist literature on the welfare state. [...] regulations in politics of gender equality [are found] within the framework of the political power tradition, they address individual *rights* and the *distribution* of women and men within different institutions. [...] we think such political measures will have limited effects when it comes to changing gender-segregated working life. This does not imply a critique of the measures in themselves, but is rather an attempt [...] to raise a debate precisely about *the limits of politics* (original emphasis, 2002: 53)

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<sup>702</sup> See also Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg (1994: 52) and Holst (2002c: 134-135).

<sup>703</sup> See also my discussion of privacy in Chapter 9.

<sup>704</sup> Widerberg is inspired by the analysis of Julia Kristeva.

<sup>705</sup> An exception is Raaum (1995).

<sup>706</sup> See also Raaum (1995), Egeland (1999), Øvreliid (2000), Holst (2002a), Bugge Tenden (2002), Mortensen (2002).

Ellingsæter and Solheim's concern here is not so much the normative limits of politics and government, but to discuss why political measures, regrettably, are bound to be inefficient in certain areas. Critique against attempts to mix scientific practice with a personal-political agenda in the feminist research field, is more often raised: The personal is not always scientifically relevant, it is argued.<sup>707</sup>

#### 5.4.11 Capitalism and patriarchy

In his article “Kjønn og klasse i et formanalytisk perspektiv”<sup>708</sup> the sociologist of work Øystein Gullvåg Holter introduces a sociological perspective based on Marx' notion of “social form” (1991: 3). Gullvåg Holter's aim is to compare “production of surplus value” and processes of “exploitation” in “the two main forms of capitalist patriarchy” in the twentieth-century; “masculine” industrial capitalism, which accepts male dominance, and the “androgynous” capitalism of “the new information society” where gender equality makes the standard (op.cit.: 4, 18). Exploitation, which is the cause of “reifying and asymmetrical” working conditions and life processes, needs to be analyzed in the light of the “concrete development of the economy of commodity and different value forms shaped by this development” (op.cit.: 9, 17). In this connection Gullvåg Holter criticizes the “social categories” of “modernist” social analyses,<sup>709</sup> because they are “essentialist” and introduced on a “formal abstract” level, disconnected from the “real abstract level”, the “real basis of the social form of which they [the social categories] are part” (op.cit.: 8, 9):

Jon Elster, who regards Marx' historical concept of exploitation as a subcategory of his own a-historical classification of distribution, [...] takes *the concept* (the concept of exploitation, the concept of injustice etc.) considered as universal, i.e. from an utterly modern point of view, as the point of departure for his analysis. [...] When [Anna G.] Jonasdottir<sup>710</sup> explicates what exploitation of women might mean, she follows in Elster's and ‘analytical marxism's’ footsteps. She thinks ‘love power’ is the basis of women's exploitation, but she is discussing this power *in abstracto* [...] (original emphasis, op.cit.: 8)

Gullvåg Holter defends a Marxist feminism that is not simply “analytical”; preoccupied with the “abstract” connections between concepts, as if there were concepts valid for every

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<sup>707</sup> See 5.4.5.

<sup>708</sup> “Gender and Class in a Form-Analytical Perspective”.

<sup>709</sup> The “analytical Marxism” of Jon Elster is Gullvåg Holter's prime example (1991: 9). He considers analytical Marxism to be “an extreme variant of the bourgeois philosophy of Enlightenment” (ibid.).

<sup>710</sup> He refers to Anna G. Jonasdottir's analysis of patriarchy and capitalism in *Love, Power and Political Interests*.

“historical form of society” (op.cit.: 9). His point of departure is Marxism as “qualitative social analysis”, as “value theory” and “commodity analysis”, focusing on “the connections between economic reification” and the “conceptual essentialism” of the “bourgeois philosophy of Enlightenment” (ibid.). Elster and Jonasdottir operate on the “fictive-universal” level of formal abstractions, he argues (op.cit.: 10).

Within the framework of Gullvåg Holter’s Marxist feminism, these formal abstractions are analyzed rather as “symptoms of”<sup>711</sup> real abstractions (ibid.). A different set of normative concepts is relied on in this analysis. The problem is no longer “distributive inequality” between “classes”, “races”, and “women and men”, as in “bourgeois” social analysis, but rather “reification”, “exploitation”, “alienation” and real “asymmetry” (op.cit.: 17). “Distributive inequality is a far too narrow a concept”; it does not capture the oppressive social implications of the patriarchal-capitalist hierarchy of value forms (ibid.). The thinking of modernity – also in the disguise of analytical Marxism – “reduces” the broader concept of exploitation to a concept of distributive injustice, replacing talk of “qualitative social change” with technocratic talk about quantitative change within the parameters of contemporary androgynous capitalism (op.cit.: 18).

We are confronted again by an argument that contains several points of interest for further examination. I will consider three of them here.<sup>712</sup>

i) Gullvåg Holter introduces the thinking of modernity as accepting the sufferings and injustices caused by the capitalist system. Many are convinced that this is the case; that accepting modern thought is accepting the norms of capitalism. There is, according to Hildur Ve, a close relationship between “the ideas within moral/political philosophy about autonomous persons who are capable of making their minds up and defending their opinions against pressure from others”, and “economic ideas about market freedom as a liberating force”; modern “individualization” as such on the one hand, capitalist “commodification and alienation” on the other (1999: 128, 142). Anne Hellum likewise positions the liberal conception of human rights and economic modernization theory within an undifferentiated

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<sup>711</sup> “[...] to put it in a rather simplified and Freudian way” (Gullvåg Holter 1991: 10).

<sup>712</sup> I deal with the relationship between individual and group in 5.4.8, the critique of the modern project as culturally repressive and normalizing in 5.4.7. The critique of instrumental rationality is dealt with in 5.4.12. An argument that has much in common with Gullvåg Holter’s argument introduced here, is Gulli’s argument, elaborated in 5.4.9.

cluster of normative ideas (1999: 45, 413-414). In a presentation of liberalism, Gro Hagemann introduces the liberal political heritage and the economic theory of Adam Smith as two facets of the same worldview (1997: 31). In her analysis of gendered metaphors and rhetoric in the history of philosophy, Berit von der Lippe (1999) sees the development of liberal democracy and the development of capitalism as two expressions of the same repressive cultural logic. Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg exemplify the modern idea of individual autonomy as introduced in the works of Marshall Berman, with the visions of the good life as expressed by the former general manager of the Swedish firm Volvo, Per Gyllenhammer, in an interview with SAS flight magazine, *Scanorama* (1994: 39).

Even among those who accept that a defense of political liberalism implies a defense of economic liberalism, there are several who recognize, however, at least in occasional passages, that “the ethics of rights” and “ideas about market freedom” can be distinguished (Ve 1999: 140, 142). In her presentation of liberal-feminist ideology where liberal views are generally linked to right-wing politics, Beatrice Halsaa is in the end somewhat ambivalent:

There are significant differences between the notion of freedom as understood by the social liberals and the market liberals; the first are concerned with freedom meaning freedom from poverty etc., while the latter focus on freedom from public regulation (1996: 185).

Kari Martinsen also turns, ultimately, to the vocabulary of rights and to Kantian formulations of “human dignity” and persons as “end[s] in [...] [them]selves” in order to give the full picture of the proper normative basis of care work in the welfare state, even if in her overall argument she lets her critique of modern ideas and of capitalism run together (1999: 260).<sup>713</sup>

ii) Gullvåg Holter regards the capitalist system as a morally flawed system: Capitalism is a way of organizing society that is hard or even impossible to combine with a concern for justice, decent values and the aim of women’s liberation. Many argue likewise, sometimes very explicitly, such as criminologist Kjersti Ericsson who explicates the development of “a

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<sup>713</sup> Her overall argument is, accordingly, that the concern for justice needs to be replaced by a concern for care. In the end, however, her concern seems to be rather that care must be added to justice, because justice by itself is insufficient: “[...] cannot law built on universally valid obligations about human dignity and where the body is never treated as a means, but as an end in itself, also lead to a development where research interests, academic prestige and economic thinking are given priority over the vulnerable body? Can obligations work as abstract ideas that do not give protection in actual situations? [...] Because one does not see the other as someone that concerns me, if I let myself be ruled by the idea of human dignity or the idea of the right attitude to the body. A restrictive law for a good case is [...] not enough in itself” (Martinsen 1999: 260). But even if such a law is not sufficient, Martinsen seems to presuppose that such a law is necessary.

social morality based on utility and efficiency”, “the separation of production and housework”, the link made between “man and the male” and “the public sphere”, and between “woman and the female” and “the private sphere” – and the oppression of women that is the outcome of these developments – as implications of “the development of capitalism” (1992: 32, 33, 34). Women’s emancipation, moreover, presupposes “revolutionary” changes, Ericsson argues; a “fundamental” transformation of “the economy and organization of society” (op.cit.: 41). Critique of capitalism is, however, just as often a frame of reference that is taken for granted. Anne Hilde Nagel’s positive reception of the political philosophy of Mary Wollstonecraft is illustrative on this point. Nagel is careful to position Wollstonecraft not in “the Anglo-Saxon tradition”, stemming from Adam Smith and John Locke, which stressed the significance of “freedom”, “liberties of the market”, “private ownership” and “free trade”, but rather in “the French tradition” stressing “equality”, “democracy” and “social rights” (1999: 138, 139). Given the dominant negative assessment of capitalism, to disassociate Wollstonecraft from the ideas of economic liberalism is crucial, or she can hardly be considered to be a philosopher of feminist relevance, i.e. the disassociation is a precondition for giving a reception that is positive.

The critics of capitalism stress different problems. Some concentrate on explicating the relationship between capitalist exploitation and unequal distribution of power, positions and income. One example is sociologist Gunn Elisabeth Birkelund who, on the basis of Erik Olin Wright’s neo-Marxist class analysis and John H. Goldthorpe’s neo-Weberian approach to inequality, discuss the interconnections between class, gender and “capitalist power”, “leadership power” and “expert power”, utilizing income statistics and job distribution data (2002: 175, 179, 181).<sup>714</sup> Others follow Gullvåg Holter and stress the qualitative problems of capitalism as a specific socio-cultural form; the problems of commodification and alienation. Such problems are sometimes elaborately addressed and criticized,<sup>715</sup> other times presumed by reference. Many refer for example, often briefly, to Carol Pateman’s radical critique of contractual relations in *The Sexual Contract*.<sup>716</sup>

It is hard to find contributors who explicitly defend the capitalist organization of the economy. There are, however, many who subscribe to societal models that rely crucially on the

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<sup>714</sup> See also Wærness (1998a), Sørensen (1999).

<sup>715</sup> Cf. Gulli (1994), Heen (1995), Gullvåg Holter (1997), Pettersen (1999), Sørhaug (2002), Egeland (2004a).

<sup>716</sup> Cf. Halsaa (1992), Hagemann (1997), Hagemann and Åmark (1999), Lotherington (1999), Ellingsæter and Solheim (2002).

existence of markets and private ownership. Consider, for example, the commentators who argue in favor of a reformist welfare state.<sup>717</sup>

iii) Gullvåg Holter wants to replace a feminism of the modern imaginary with a feminism that puts the critique of capitalism and patriarchy at its center; “liberal feminism” should be replaced with “Marxist feminism”, “socialist feminism” and “radical feminism”, to quote Beatrice Halsaa’s scheme of different feminist ideologies (1996b: 152-161, 166-173). Just as several contributors defend the relevance of Marxism for feminism,<sup>718</sup> there are many who make use of radical feminist conceptions of patriarchy or related ideas of gendered power systems.<sup>719</sup>

A few contributors note, however, that it is possible to criticize both capitalist power relations and patriarchal power, without subscribing to Marxist or radical feminist political programs and social analyses. Such arguments are typically linked to a dismissal of crucial aspects of such programs and analyses. Several authors criticize, for example, radical-feminist notions of patriarchy as a universal gender system: “The problem of such theories of patriarchy” are that they rest, ultimately, on a single core claim: that “there has never existed a single known society where women as a group have had ‘full’ power over men as a group”, as historian Kristin Natvig Aas points out (1993: 27):

What [Gerda] Lerner<sup>720</sup> forgets is that there has also never existed one single known society in which men have had ‘full’ power over women. Universal gender-based distributions of power hardly exist, and have, accordingly, no value as a basis for power theories. Power is and remains a notion with many facets. [...] asking open questions about who has power over who in which situations, one is more likely to reach a better understanding of the power balance between the genders (op.cit.: 40).<sup>721</sup>

And many at least assume that Marxist theory and politics are not something to which feminists should subscribe. Nina Raaum’s description of the feminist movements of the 1970s is illustrative:

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<sup>717</sup> Cf. Brækhus (1995, 2000, 2002), Haavet (1995), Leira (1996, 1998), Christensen (1997), Kitterød (1999), Petersen (2002).

<sup>718</sup> Consider the examples listed in ii).

<sup>719</sup> Consider the examples listed in 5.4.7.

<sup>720</sup> She refers to The American historian Gerda Lerner’s book *The Creation of Patriarchy*.

<sup>721</sup> For a critique of radical-feminist universalist notions of patriarchy, see also Fossestøl (2000), Haukanes (2001), Bjerrum Nielsen (2003), Lorentzen (2004).

The liberals that were in the periphery of theoretical discussions in women's research at the time, argued that discriminating norms and institutions could be most effectively transformed through gender equality reforms, giving women the chance to pursue their rights on an equal footing with men. This [...] strategy [...] was criticized by the new women's movement and women's research that were inspired by a tradition more critical of society. The socialist-feminists focused on the capitalist system and women's relationship to production and reproduction, while the radical-feminists considered the hierarchical gender system of society (and state), that is patriarchy, as the key problem (1995: 26-27).

Explicit and elaborated refutations of Marxism are, however, rare.<sup>722</sup> Some contributors inspired by poststructuralist theory emphasize the problematic materialist bias in Marxist social analysis; its relative disregard for the problem of cultural recognition of marginalized groups. They do, however, not dismiss Marxist critique of capitalism as such, but rather a feminism that is based on Marxist materialism exclusively.<sup>723</sup> Research into gender relations based on Marxist and radical-feminist assumptions are also accused of being politically prejudiced. Marxists and radical feminists tend, it is argued, to turn their theories of power into dogmas that they then maintain despite empirical change and variation.<sup>724</sup>

#### **5.4.12 Rationality, femininity and sentiments**

In social anthropologist Elisabeth L'orange Fürst's *Mat – et annet språk. Rasjonalitet, kropp og kvinnelighet* (1995)<sup>725</sup> the main ambition is “epistemological” and “foundational”; to read “food” as a “language” that tells us something about “rationality, identity and social distinctions”, in particular “femininity and masculinity”, and so about “work, reproduction and socialization” (1995: 12). L'orange Fürst's empirical material is texts and existing studies from different relevant disciplines: social anthropology, psychology, comparative literature and theology, in addition to fiction. In this material, she finds traces of a peculiar “form of rationality”, “an everyday rationality” connected with the female lifeworld (op.cit.: 14). By rationality she means both “value orientation” and “action type”, i.e. “ways to relate to the world mentally, bodily and emotionally”(ibid.). Hence, her notion differs both from “the traditional philosophical” notion of rationality and from rationality as a “game theoretical” term (ibid.). The everyday rationality of the female lifeworld is, in short, a

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<sup>722</sup> See, however, how Helga Hernes links her elaboration of state feminism to a critique of Marxism (discussed in Chapter 6).

<sup>723</sup> Cf. Meyer (1999), Mortensen (2002), Gressgård (2003).

<sup>724</sup> Consider for example Nina C. Raaum and Eli Skogerbø's criticism (1993) of Beatrice Halsaa, Bjarne Øvreid's criticism of Hanne Haavind (2000), Hanne Davidsen, Susanna M. Solli and Elisabeth Waaler's (1996) criticism of Karin Widerberg and Gro Hagemann's (2003) criticism of the Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman's analyses of what Hirdman refers to as the 'genus system' (see Chapter 6).

<sup>725</sup> *Food – a Different Language. Rationality, Body and Femininity.*

rationality of “ambiguity” (ibid.). Ways of valuing and acting in this setting are often “essentially ambiguous” – they are “amphibolic”,<sup>726</sup> “non-voluntaristic”, “spontaneous” and “reflective”, “manifest” and “latent”, “intended” and “unintended” at the same time (op.cit.: 16).

In her conceptualization, L’orange Fürst relies on Marxist theory of knowledge,<sup>727</sup> phenomenological theory and psychoanalytical theory.<sup>728</sup> The “action” she focuses on is “mothering”, considered as a form of “work”, exemplified by “making/serving food”, and on girls’ and young women’s socialization into “mothers”, the making of a feminine identity suited for a mother’s work (ibid.). What characterizes the work of mothers is its mediating character; it “mediates between nature and culture, body and language” (op.cit.: 17). Moreover, it is “relational” work, it requires “sensitivity towards *the other* and the other’s needs” (original emphasis, ibid.). It follows “a relational logic” of “other-orientation”; it implies “no unitary self-orientation” (original emphasis, ibid.). On this basis L’orange Fürst highlights the significance of ambivalent understandings, and of dismissing “paradigms” of “unitary” and “dualist” thinking that separate “body from soul, reason from emotions, and ego from alter” (ibid.). In this connection she discusses dialectical as well as poststructuralist approaches. Her project can thus be read, she says, “as a discussion of modern and postmodern positions”, where she relies on Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Dag Østerberg, Jacques Derrida, Hélène Cixous, and above all, Julia Kristeva (op.cit.: 17-18).

In short, L’orange Fürst’s project, as she describes it in a later work, looking back on her earlier efforts, is to leave behind the “general theory of the human being, more or less explicitly understood as a strategic-rational actor that maximizes its own interests”, prominently defended in the rational-choice theory of Jon Elster,<sup>729</sup> “[...] a certain kind of *rationality* that characterizes a certain kind of action, characteristic of the system of capitalist production of commodities”,<sup>730</sup> and to develop “a totally different theoretical framework, [...] when approaching what a human being is as well as [...] epistemology”, a framework that does not have “the connotations of maximization, ego-centeredness, strategic behavior,

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<sup>726</sup> She refers to the Norwegian sociologist and social philosopher Dag Østerberg’s *Fortolkende sosiologi (Interpretative Sociology)*.

<sup>727</sup> See also 5.4.11.

<sup>728</sup> See also 5.4.14.

<sup>729</sup> See L’orange Fürst (2002: 35) for the reference to Jon Elster.

<sup>730</sup> See 5.4.11, and the critique of capitalism as social form.



exploitation etc., which characterize to a lesser degree, I still wish to maintain, women's practices and ways of thinking, rather than men's" (original emphasis, 2002: 27, 28).

Several contributors present proposals of an alternative rationality similar to L'orange Fürst's, even if all proposals are not equally elaborated and sophisticated.<sup>731</sup> Generally speaking, the main ambition of these proposals is to replace or at least add to the instrumental rationality, egoism and narcissism of the modern imaginary with ideas of a different way of acting and thinking, modeled on ethically valuable practices in the everyday life of women. These feminine ways of acting and thinking are valuable because they enable us to be true to our sentiments and desires,<sup>732</sup> and because they are ways of acting and thinking which are fundamentally oriented towards others; they are practices of care, responsibility, solidarity and altruism.

There are numerous examples and variants of this argument. The rationality of "liberalism" is the rationality of treating other people and our environment simply as means to service our own selfish ends, "at the cost of standing together and solidarity", Linda Rustad concludes her proposal for a new normative basis for feminist politics (1999: 94). Liberalism's focus on what is "useful" (Hagemann 1997: 33), "the technical-instrumental understanding of life" of "liberalism" that disregards all other values than use value" (Martinsen 1997: 22), puts "individuals" and not "relations at the center, so that, in our movement towards others, we become obsessed with ourselves" (Martinsen 1997: 32).<sup>733</sup> The rationality of the project of modernity is thus equated with the rationality of rational-choice theory, with rationality as a "game-theoretical term" (L'orange Fürst 1995: 14). It is linked, moreover, to the idea "that subject positions [...] are taken exclusively to be an outcome of the rational calculation of a fully informed actor" (Flemmen 1999: 132), and thus to a naïve notion of introspective transparency: "[...] this peculiar form of masculinist, humanist self-deceit based on the idea that Human Beings' intentions control everything in the world" (Asdal and Brenna 1998:

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<sup>731</sup> The theoretical richness of L'orange Fürst's proposal is lost in my brief presentation here.

<sup>732</sup> Women are not only to be considered as "active participants" relating to "reasons", they should also be recognized as "subjects" with "desires" (Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg 1994: 72,79,80). See also for example Widding Isaksen (1992, 2002), Andenæs (1995), Andersen (1996, 1997), Flemmen (1999), as well as the critique of the modern subject (in 5.4.4).

<sup>733</sup> For similar statements, see for example Oftedal Telhaug (1992), Widerberg (2001), Wærness (2004).

28).<sup>734</sup> Finally, the rationality of modern thought allows for, it even inspires, egoism and narcissism.

Such descriptions and contextualizations of modern rationality lay the ground for elaborations of how sensitivity to our sentiments, or alternative rationalities more sensitive to our sentiments, should add to or even replace modern rationality. Kari Martinsen (1997) argues, for example, for a rationality of care, linked to Carol Gilligan's analysis of women's different moral voice and to Sara Ruddick and Virginia Held's ethics of motherly practice, as well as to the moral philosophy of K. E. Løgstrup and Emmanuel Levinas.<sup>735</sup> Professor in science studies, Knut Holtan Sørensen, argues for the development of a women-friendly technology based on "care values"; a technology that is "influenced by care" and make us become more "caring" (1991: 224, 225). This is meant as a supplement to a technology of "masculine qualities"; based on men's rationality, linked to the significance of values such as "objectivity", "precision" and "distance", and the emphasize on "distinguishing" sharply, for example, between what is claimed in an argument and who are claiming it (op.cit.: 216). Relying on feminist psychoanalytical and poststructuralist theory,<sup>736</sup> Monica Rudberg contrasts the female approach to knowledge with the male; "the female epistemophilic project"<sup>737</sup> or "research-passion" differs from the male (1996b: 301):

The female epistemophilic project does not begin with a father's categorical prohibition, and therefore it might never become as obsessive and monolithic as the male passion for knowledge – just like the girl's solution of the oedipal conflict does not seem to be as total as the boy's, but results in a sort of bisexual wavering between mother and father. The male metaphors of knowledge centering around penetrating gazes will perhaps never be really appropriated by her (op.cit.: 301-302)

The female epistemophilic project "might be seen as [...] more oral (is that why we love interviewing?) [...], less tormenting than the male one. [...] it is also less defensive and therefore with the possibilities of becoming less boring and more pleasurable" (op.cit.: 302-303). The female approach to knowledge should not replace the male standard, but influence and temper it, because "the passionate monomania of Frankenstein", of the male inquirer

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<sup>734</sup> This is a point often highlighted in contributions on psychoanalysis (see for example Engelsrud 1992, Solheim 1994, Bjørby 2001).

<sup>735</sup> See also Widerberg (1990), Berggren (1993), Rudberg (1996a, 1996b), Aslaksen (1996), Ve (1999), Wiestad (2002). Consider also the elaboration of Wencke Mühleisen's argument in 5.4.10.

<sup>736</sup> Among those referred to are Judith Butler, Rosi Braidotti, Luce Irigaray and Julia Kristeva, in addition to Norwegian contributors, such as Toril Moi, Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Karin Widerberg.

<sup>737</sup> "'Epistemophilia' is originally a Freudian term, where the human urge to gain knowledge is associated with the child's sexual curiosity" (Rudberg 1996b: 285).

“absorbed” in his research, leaves no room for concern for others (ibid.). The female inquirer knows that “she cannot leave her newborn and helpless child – and if she did, who would take care of Frankenstein?” (ibid.). Also the female other-oriented epistemophilic project must be tempered, however: A woman needs “to keep her passions at a manageable size, so that she will not vanish completely. [...] her epistemophilic project is both about recreating the maternal relation as well as her breaking out of it” (ibid.).

The idea of an alternative female rationality is, however, disputed. Some criticize the empirical foundation of this idea: “The care ethicists ignore [...] that women are different: all do not live in marriage” or as “mothers” (Raaum 1995: 36-37). Hence, to maintain that women act and think in a different way from men is based on stereotypes and prejudices of both women<sup>738</sup> and men.<sup>739</sup> Other authors criticize not so much the idea that there can be found traces of an alternative idea of rationality more sensitive to our emotions in the human lifeworld, but rather the claim that they can be found in particular in women’s ways of acting and thinking:

I contradict Carol Gilligan: I do not think it has been established that moral agency is (‘typically’, it must be added) one thing for a female agent and another for a male. In short, I defend a unitary notion of moral agency and moral performance, one neutral as to gender. Yet, for all its being unitary and disputing systematic gender difference, the notion advocated is not one-sided or otherwise narrow. Far from it, my notion of moral agency sees *diversity* as crucial [...]. My focus, briefly put, is on the significance of the interplay between different faculties (such as emotional and cognitive ones) in each individual agent, again irrespective of gender (original emphasis, Vetlesen 1996: 100).

Still others focus on what they regard as a moralistic and voluntaristic subtext of the critique of modern individualism, egoism and instrumentalism. This critique tends to replace subtle analysis of human interaction and social institutions with prejudiced assumption about the inner psychological states of the agents; of their ‘egoism’ or ‘altruism’, it is argued.<sup>740</sup>

In addition to these discussions of the empirical and social-theoretical adequacy of the proposals for an alternative female rationality, there are also discussions on the standards of validity they prescribe. Some are critical of alternative criteria of scientific warrant and truth: Research, also feminist research, should be regulated by the rationality standards of modern

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<sup>738</sup> Cf. Steinfelt (1990), Borchgrevink (1995), Solheim (1998, 1999).

<sup>739</sup> Cf. Aarseth (1995), Fossetøl (2000), Slottemo (2000), Lorentzen (2004).

<sup>740</sup> Cf. Lundgren (2001), Loga (2002), Nicolaysen (2002).

thought.<sup>741</sup> Other commentators stress the problems of feminist care-ethical proposals. They are critical because they consider such proposals to be based on stereotypic descriptions of women and men, and to reproduce the gender dichotomy,<sup>742</sup> because they disagree with the care-feminist conception of what is ethically valuable,<sup>743</sup> because they are critical of allowing moral norms to be influenced by particular values,<sup>744</sup> or because they dismiss an emotivist approach to normative questions.<sup>745</sup>

Moreover, there are contributors who are highly critical of the dominance of instrumental rationality in modern society, and of ideologies inspiring consumerism, privatism and egoism, from the perspective of modern thought. L'orange Fürst express in fact this view, even if ambivalently,<sup>746</sup> when she points out the similarities between Jürgen Habermas's notion of communicative rationality and her own proposal of an alternative rationality:

Habermas is, as I read him, one of those who have worked with a theory of *counter-rationalities* in relation to the technical-instrumental system-world, capitalist production if you want. The problem [...] is the mechanism he [Habermas] regards as characterizing capitalism, namely [...] a permanent expansion of the subsystems regulated by means- end rational[ity] [...] (my emphasis, 2002: 28).

Øystein Gullvåg Holter makes a parallel point. He criticizes idealized feminist descriptions of “women's work [as] alternative work regulated by non-economic principles (emancipatory minimum in the mother-child relationship and so on)”, as the source of an alternative female other-oriented rationality (1995: 58). That is: He does not deny that alternative rationalities of this sort may regulate the activities of the female lifeworld. He criticizes, however, the process of “*repressive devaluation*”; the process in which the sources of such rationalities, such as “*the relationship between mother and child*”, are placed “outside modernity [...], *made old*, archaicized, [...]”; are disconnected from the political economy of modern societies (original emphasis, op.cit.: 61). Counter-rationalities should be considered as the marginalized outcome of modernity, not as pre-modern or pre-social residues.<sup>747</sup> Avoiding associating the rationality of modern thought exclusively with instrumental rationality, is also the aim of

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<sup>741</sup> Cf. Sørensen (1999), Bleie (2003a, 2003b).

<sup>742</sup> Critique of dichotomous, heterosexist approaches to gender is the core of the ‘queer theory’ subscribed to by several authors, see for example Eng and Markussen (2000), Mortensen, Bjørby, Lie, Brandser and Angvik (2001), Egeland (2004a, 2004b).

<sup>743</sup> Cf. Solheim (1998, 1999), Holst (2003).

<sup>744</sup> Cf. Bojer (2001), Bugge Tenden (2002).

<sup>745</sup> Cf. Serck-Hanssen (2000/2001).

<sup>746</sup> Her proposal of a counter-rationality is very different from Habermas'.

<sup>747</sup> Gullvåg Holter mentions L'orange Fürst's proposal of a feminine rationality of the gift as an example of a “de-economiz[ed]” approach to what “in reality is part of how economy works” (1991, 1995: 61).

Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg's psychological analysis of modernity. Bjerrum Nielsen and Rudberg interpret the capacity for reflexivity as a capacity better developed among the women (than men) of modernity; it is one of "the civilizatory contribution of women" (1994: 53). They elaborate the rationality of modern subjects, referring to Thomas Ziehe. It is a rationality characterized by:

[...] first, *reflexivity*, a permanent need to relate to oneself and evaluate oneself; secondly, [by] an enormous belief in the *makeability* of ourselves and our circumstances, which also results in tiring demands to find good reasons for what we do and don't do; and thirdly, [by] *individualization* – the fact that we are not products of our heritage or social position (op.cit.: 52).

Enlightenment is thus not associated exclusively with the expansion of instrumental rationality, but rather with the expansion of "reflexivity", "makeability" and "individualization" (ibid.).

Finally, a few contributors seem in fact to accept the view that thinkers of modernity prescribe us to act instrumentally and self-interested, without highlighting it as a problem. Kristin Dale positions, for example, economics as part of the tradition from Adam Smith, T.R. Malthus, David Ricardo and John Stuart Mill, which "[...] focused on the market as an instrument of division of labor and increased economic welfare", and based on the presupposition that "the most common basis of rationality for the individual [is] maximizing [...] [its] own utility" (1992: 247).

Theories based on rational-choice theory and utilitarian moral philosophy can be of use in attempts to conceptualize and address distributive gender injustice (op.cit.: 251). Dale mentions John Rawls as an example:

The philosopher John Rawls (1971) has suggested the maximin-criteria, which imply that the regulating principle should be to maximize utility for the person worst off. If a woman is worst off, the criterion is that one should choose the best alternative for her (ibid.).<sup>748</sup>

In a positive reception of the liberal philosophy of John Stuart Mill and Harriet Taylor, Anne Birgitte Rønning stresses how

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<sup>748</sup> To interpret Rawls' philosophy as founded in rational-choice theory and utilitarianism is most often done by his critics, not by his defenders.

[...] reflections on freedom, where equality among human beings is a presupposition for individual freedom, and a utilitarian perspective where human happiness and social utility and development are inextricably interconnected (1999: 186).

Like Dale, Rønning assumes that liberal and utilitarian ideas are interwoven, and may be put in the service of feminism.<sup>749</sup>

### 5.4.13 The aesthetical transcending the modern

In her article “Kantian Pleasure and Feminist Theory. Dialogue with an Androcentric Philosopher”, philosopher Else Wiestad discusses the feminist relevance of Kant’s “much debated book” *Beobachtungen über das Gefühl des Schönen und Erhabenen*, where he develops “Rousseau’s anthropological theory of a gender divided human nature [...] into a moral and aesthetic theory of gender” (1996: 84). Kant’s point of departure is Rousseau’s; “that human’s must be understood as two clearly different gender prototypes, equipped with incompatible, but complementary abilities and qualities” (ibid.). In *Beobachtungen*

[...] gender is tied to the fundamental aesthetic notions of the *beautiful* and the *sublime* [...]. Sublime (and masculine) emotions move us when we regard something great, powerful or mighty, which is elevated above the level of ordinary life. Beautiful (and feminine) feelings are awakened by everything that gives pleasure and delight, is playful and effortless, stirs and enchant us (original emphasis, op.cit.: 84-85).

This aesthetic theory – Kant’s association from the sublime to masculinity, from the beautiful to femininity – is linked to Kant’s view that “women’s intellectual and moral capabilities” are linked to “her capacity of feeling” and considered “best developed in aesthetics and through refined sentiments”, whereas the man is considered “a creature of formal reasoning” equipped for “mathematics and natural sciences”; “the feminine rationality [...] is *beautiful*” while the masculine rationality is “*deep*” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 85). Women, according to Kant, should not “exert herself intellectually, she ought not to try to extend the limits of her natural capacity”; she is “bound by nature’s intrinsic goals and limits” (ibid.). Women are moreover, he maintains, incapable of acting “from duty”; “from regard for a common ethical law”, even if they may act “in accordance with” duty – their acts may be “correct”, but not “morally good” (ibid.). They are capable of acting “ethically beautiful, from love and sympathetic

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<sup>749</sup> There is, moreover, much debate on feminist strategies; on how feminists may achieve their aims effectively, in the material I have surveyed (see 5.4.6).

benevolence”, but “these acts are not genuine moral since they do not arise from universal principles” (ibid.).

Wiestad is struck by the similarities between contemporary feminist moral philosophy of “care and responsiveness to others”, as it has been developed by among others Carol Gilligan and Anette Baier, and “the Kantian ethics of feminine pleasure”; Kant’s idea that women’s moral judgments are based on “aesthetic taste and refined emotions”, that is, if her “beautiful nature” is properly “cultivated” (op.cit.: 86, 89).<sup>750</sup> Whereas contemporary care feminism “clearly contradicts Kant’s *masculine* morality, which emphasizes general principles and an autonomous, rational moral agent”, it is “in reasonably good harmony with his *feminine* morality” as developed in *Beobachtungen* (original emphasis, op.cit.: 88). Thus, Wiestad asserts, “referring to Kant’s moral philosophy, we cannot today discuss him merely as a typical example of the justice tradition” (op.cit.: 91). As far as women are concerned, Kant is “a philosopher of pleasure” who stresses the significance of “emotions of a delicate kind, developed into a refined aesthetic taste and capability of judgment” (op.cit.: 93). Wiestad envisages the need for both “feminine” care and “masculine” justice in contemporary societies: “[...] mankind *in total* is dependent on and must preserve many constructive traditional feminine and masculine values” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 96). Whether we “may utilize” both, “alternately or together, or whether we want to mutually modify, harmonise, and create a future gender transcending norm- and valuestructure” (ibid.).

Hence, Wiestad argues that we should let aesthetic judgment influence our moral assessments: This female approach to morality should add to the male approach. Several contributors stress the significance of making aesthetics relevant in deliberations on what is good and right, and links, in different ways, the capacity to tie aesthetic reflections to such deliberations, to femininity.<sup>751</sup> The feminine stress on the aesthetical is also used critically in attempts to reconstruct scientific practices and standards.<sup>752</sup> Inspired by among others Roland Barthes and Helénè Cixous, the cultural theorist Sissel Lie “imagines a kind of scientific discourse” where “science is not reduced to fiction or poetry”, but where the author “[...] takes personal responsibility for her text, [...] and express herself in language, because science is language” (1990: 7, 11). “Scientific discourse” should be “overflowed” with a “discourse of freedom”

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<sup>750</sup> Wiestad refers to Baier’s elaboration of David Hume as “women’s moral theorist” (1996: 96).

<sup>751</sup> Cf. Svrljuga (1990), Kolbjørnsen (1994), Lie (1996, 2001), Bjørnsnøs (1998), Meyer (1999), Langås (2002), Findal (2002),. See also the explication of Mühleisen argument against the public-private divide (5.4.10).

<sup>752</sup> See 5.4.5.

where scientists, “play with words”, “associate”, make “language games”, “use the poetic qualities of language to gain new knowledge”, “emancipate [their] creativity” to “make the world as [they] want it to be” (ibid.).

Nordist and literary scholar Paal Bjørby, inspired by among others Michel Foucault’s “aesthetics of the self” and Judith Butler’s performative notion of gender, talks of a radical aesthetic intervention, not from a perspective of femininity, but from a queer perspective, that challenges both “epistemologically and politically”; that destabilize “the power/knowledge regime governing the constitution of self and society” generally (2001: 326, 337). “Those who refer to themselves as queer seek to avoid the discipline and normalizing power of the cultural categories of gender and sexuality”, so central to “the construction of individual identity, truth and knowledge” in our society, and they do so inspired by “the fractious, the disruptive, the irritable, the impatient, the unapologetic, the bitchy, the camp” (2001: 325-326, 344).<sup>753</sup>

Not all link their argument for the significance of aesthetics to a critique of the modern imaginary, however. In a literary analysis of the novels of the Swedish author Moa Martinson, literary scholar Anne Heith concludes that analyses of Martinson’s novels anchored in “different perspectives grounded in different aesthetical ideals [...] reach opposite conclusions” (1993: 7). She turns this conclusion into a general critique of established scientific standards which do not take into account how aesthetic judgment may influence what we regard as scientifically warranted. This critique overlaps, in her view, with Herbert Marcuse’s and Jürgen Habermas’ criticism of positivist ideas of science: “The ideological turn of the 1960s with the relativization of science as implication, can be seen as the point of departure for this look at the writings of Moa Martinson. In particular Jürgen Habermas’ works play here a central role [...]” (op.cit.: 57).

Some commentators are, moreover, skeptical of the whole idea of bringing aesthetics into politics and moral deliberations. Beatrice Halsaa (1998) questions the value of aesthetic theory for practical politics as well as for thinking about politics, worried that an increased focus on such theory may depoliticize the feminist research field.<sup>754</sup> In her defense of established standards of good science from the attack of feminist postmodern and standpoint

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<sup>753</sup> Bjørby paraphrase and quote here David Halperin and Carol Dinshaw, editors of the journal *GLQ (Gay, Lesbian, Queer)*. For similar arguments from a queer-perspective, see for example Solli (1999), Mortensen (2001), Svare (2001), Egeland (2004a, 2004b).

<sup>754</sup> See also Wærness (1993), Eeg-Henriksen (1998), Stümer (1998), Sørensen (1999), Skotnes (2004).



epistemologists, Tone Bleie (2003a) criticizes, moreover, both the experimental form of certain feminist epistemologists, and feminists' attempt to transform standards of scientific warrant on the basis of misconceived ideas about the interconnections between aesthetics, politics and inquiry.

#### **5.4.14 Below the surface – phenomenology, existentialism, ontology**

*Hva er en kvinne? Kjønn og kropp i feministisk teori* (1998)<sup>755</sup> is the title of an essay by the literary theorist Toril Moi. In one of the chapters, Moi interprets Simone de Beauvoir's statement in *The Second Sex* that "the body is a situation" in the light of "the phenomenological philosophy" of Merleau-Ponty that inspired Beauvoir: When Beauvoir says that a woman's body is her "situation", she means to say that a woman has a peculiar "phenomenological experience" of her body that influences all her other experiences, as well as her "projects"; "the way she spends her freedom" (op.cit.: 91, 99).

This approach to the body differs from the approach of "biological determinism": Beauvoir "insists", Moi argues, "that a woman can never be reduced to a female animal" (op.cit.: 92, 93).<sup>756</sup> It follows, moreover, from Beauvoir's "existentialist view on what human beings are": "[...] as human beings (in contrast to animals) women are always about to make themselves into what they are" (op.cit.: 94-95). They are "existence" before they are "essence" (ibid.). Beauvoir's existentialism is, however, embedded in a phenomenological philosophy of human beings', of women's as well as men's, fundamental embodiment. Human "transcendence" and "freedom" are always embodied: "[T]he body is a fundamental situation", it is "the basis of my experience of myself and of the world" (op.cit.: 95).

Women are thus embodied 'existence'. However, they are embodied, phenomenologically speaking, before they are biological bodies with "object-like features" (op.cit.: 96). To say that the body is not a "thing" but a "situation" is to say that "the body-in-the world that we are [...] is an embodied, intentional relationship to the world" (original emphasis, op.cit.: 101).<sup>757</sup> Thus, "scientism, positivism, empiricism and other so-called 'objectivist' views on the world"

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<sup>755</sup> *What is a Woman? Gender and Body in Feminist Theory*.

<sup>756</sup> Moi takes part in a debate among feminist theorists on how to interpret Beauvoir's works. Some feminists have interpreted Beauvoir as having "an essentialist view on biology" (Moi 1998: 92). Others have interpreted her as a vulgar "social constructivist" (op.cit.: 101). Moi considers both interpretations to be misconceived.

<sup>757</sup> Moi refers to the Finish feminist philosopher Sara Heinämaa. See for example Heinämaa (1996, 2000/2001).

should be dismissed; “the methodology of the natural sciences” cannot offer “a valid philosophy of human existence” (op.cit.: 96, 98). There are “innumerable ways” to live as a woman – to be a woman is compatible with so many “different projects” – and the basis of these projects is always a woman’s “specific bodily potential” (op.cit.: 99).

To deny biological determinism is, however, not to deny that “biological facts” are an “element” in women’s embodied “situation”, Moi emphasizes (op.cit.: 94).<sup>758</sup> Thus, on the one hand, Beauvoir’s approach to the body differs from the view that the body is simply a “social construction” (op.cit.: 101). On the other, Beauvoir maintains that the body cannot escape the social “facticity” that surrounds it (op.cit.: 99). The body is always “historically situated, always part of an interaction between ideologies and other kinds of social practice” (op.cit.: 91-92). Hence, the phenomenological context of a woman’s project; her situation, her fundamental embodiment, should be considered as being influenced by her biological constitution, as well as by social power and practices. Beauvoir’s original and crucial addition is, however, Moi maintains, that objectivistic descriptions of a woman’s biological features and social characteristics will never fully capture her phenomenological experience of being a woman, or completely define her projects; the basis of Beauvoir’s feminism is “a non-normative view on what a woman is” (op.cit.: 111).

I wish to focus on the general idea that Toril Moi introduces in this section of her essay: That there is a set of descriptions; descriptions of the human situation or of women’s situations as phenomenological or existential situations, that cannot be warranted exclusively through empirical investigation, for example in science (this would be ‘scientism’), or assessed from a normative point of view; they are “non-normative” (ibid.). Other authors reflect along similar lines. Some are, like Moi, particularly interested in capturing ‘what a woman is’ in existentialist or phenomenological terms.<sup>759</sup> Other commentators focus on the facets of the human situation in general. In an attempt to avoid the charge of biologicistic and psychologistic essentialism, Harriet Bjerrum Nielsen and Monica Rudberg tie, for example, human identity to certain common human capabilities and existential experiences:

Even though culturally and historically there seem to be variations in the degree to which this “me” is connected with an experience of being unique and irreplaceable, and in how it is experienced as separated or connected with others, we believe that the experience of being

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<sup>758</sup> The latter is a quote from *The Second Sex* (1949).

<sup>759</sup> Cf. Hamm (2001), Hainämaa (2000/2001), Owesen (2000/2001), Songe-Møller (2000/2001), Rekdal (2002).

somebody and of having thoughts and emotions should be considered as a common human feature, in the same way as, for example, the capability of making symbols (1994: 69).

Descriptions of this kind, whether of women or of human beings, are, moreover, also referred to in other terms; they are referred to as descriptions of ontology and subject constitution as conceptualized in psychoanalysis,<sup>760</sup> they are introduced as attempts to capture tacit dimensions of knowledge and practices,<sup>761</sup> they are regarded as descriptions on an anthropological level,<sup>762</sup> or of human embodiment.<sup>763</sup>

Generally speaking, the analyses of the human situation and women's situation inspired by existentialism and phenomenology, are presented as targeting, often radically, the modern imaginary.<sup>764</sup> Several critics attempt, however, to make their interventions compatible with the moral core of modernity. This is, for example, how I interpret philosopher Kjell Roger Soleim's dissertation (1994).<sup>765</sup> On the one hand, he argues that "sexual difference" has a deep-seated ontological or existential dimension linked to the psychoanalytical constitution of subjectivity (1994: 7), a dimension often overlooked in feminist politics. On the other hand, Soleim insists that we should think the ontology of sexual difference through while at the same time recognizing the significance of "women's struggle for equality [...] in the feminist tradition of Simone de Beauvoir" (op.cit: 5, 10), a tradition which considers "[...] women's emancipation as a continuation of the rationalist project" (op.cit.: 5):

[...] my whole dissertation [is] influenced by a more or less indirect dismissal of the postmodern deconstruction of the Cartesian subject: I wish to show how [Jacques] Lacan instead of wiping out this subject, draws new aspects of its constituting conditions into the daylight (op.cit: 16).

"[...] a total denial of *cogito* will be self-defeating" (op.cit.: 9), Soleim sums up. The challenge is rather to elaborate "the existential dimension of sexual differences" (op.cit.: 34) without making "the Occidental 'metaphysical' logos the main enemy" (op.cit.: 11).<sup>766</sup> Toril

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<sup>760</sup> Cf. Soleim (1994, 1996, 1999), Andersen (1996, 1997), Bolsø (2002), Mortensen (2003).

<sup>761</sup> See for example Skramstad (1999).

<sup>762</sup> See for example Stamnes (2000).

<sup>763</sup> Cf. Engelsrud (1992), Langås (1996), Hellesund (2002), Granaas (2004), Paulson (2004).

<sup>764</sup> Consider again the explication of Ellen Mortensen's argument in 5.4.1. Consider also how Vigdis Songe-Møller (1990a, 1990b, 1999a, 1999b) positions her philosophical analysis of the characteristics and potentials of feminine thinking.

<sup>765</sup> See also for example Øverland (1996, 2002), Iversen and Rønning (1996b)

<sup>766</sup> "I wish in this dissertation to clarify the question about the theoretical status of the Cartesian subject of science by comparing it to Jacques Lacan's theory about the unconscious subject. The point of departure here will be Lacan's identification of the (sexual) subject of psychoanalysis, with the (non-sexual) subject of science.

Moi's analyses of 'what a woman is' are in fact also significant in this connection. One of Moi's main ambitions is to challenge the sex-gender dichotomy of conventional feminist theory without ending up with a disembodied conception of performative gender.<sup>767</sup> It is as part of this project Moi makes Simone de Beauvoir her ally, because Beauvoir's phenomenological-existential notion of 'the body as situation' may be conceived as a mediating notion between sex and gender. This stress on fundamental embodiment does not, however, imply that Enlightenment ideals of equality and freedom are dismissed. In her introductory essay to *The Second Sex* (in Norwegian translation), Moi highlights rather the intimate connection between liberal rights and "concrete liberties" on the one hand, and Beauvoir's feminist vision of existential freedom for all, on the other (2000: xviii-xix).

Other contributors are skeptical of the existentialist approach of Moi and Beauvoir, because they believe descriptions of women's situation and the human situation need, as other descriptions, to be empirically warranted. Tone Bleie relies on natural-scientific studies of human evolution and cognition, when spelling out what she describes as "a common human nature": "[...] all human mental and social activity have a biological and chemical template"; this has already been "solid[ly] empirical[ly] verif[ied] [...]", according to Bleie (2003b: 187). Yet other contributors question the claim that the existential situation of women, or of men, is "non-normative" (Moi 1999: 111). In her dissertation, *Normativity and Reality. A Study of the Ethical Demand in Human Life-Reality*, Ulla Schmidt asks how "a normative claim purporting to regulate my conduct morally, could be justified" (1998: 1). As an answer to this question, Schmidt explicates what she considers to be an ethical demand within human life-reality. She argues that this 'reality'; the "structures that are characteristic of human existence in the world" imply a standard of what we ought to do (1998: 5): Human life-reality is, in this sense, not 'non-normative'.

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The paradox suggested here linked to Lacan's theory of the subject, I mean to trace back to Descartes' method of investigation and the split between subject and object attached to it. I intend among other things, on the basis of Lacan's theory of sexual difference, to try and show that this is a real paradox (for all beings with language) and not simply an expression of male-friendly dualism" (Soleim 1994: 14).

<sup>767</sup> Her main target in this connection is Judith Butler. For less critical readings of Butler's approach to gender, see for example Egeland (2001) and Hellesund (2002).

Finally, some are skeptical of all kinds of descriptions of a common human nature, on whatever level, because they consider such descriptions to be a deeply problematic ‘essentialist’ expression of deep-seated Western metaphysics.<sup>768</sup>

#### 5.4.15 Modernity, nature and culture

In her article “Inn/vendinger mot naturen – omskapende politikker”<sup>769</sup> the historian and science studies scholar Kristin Asdal explores how to study nature, given the insights of “the critique of positivism”; that knowledge cannot be “value-free and neutral”, and that research “objects” are always also “co-subjects” (1998: 149). But whereas the critics of positivism, such as Hans Skjervheim, considered this as insights relevant for the human and social sciences exclusively; when studying “human relationships”, Asdal argues that such insights should be considered relevant in studies of “nature, animals and things” (op.cit.: 149, 150). In this endeavor she relies on the work of Donna Haraway<sup>770</sup> who attempts to find new ways to engage with “the inappropriate” or “strange other(s)”, such as “different forms of nature” (op.cit.: 150): The crux of “her ambitious political and epistemological project” is to challenge the “humanism” that allows human beings to put themselves “at the center”, with exceptional powers of “agency” – a challenge we need to take on are we to make “the political practice we call science [...] a better and friendlier activity” (ibid.).

The attraction of Haraway’s approach is that it, according to Asdal, avoids the dangers of, on the one hand, naïve “ecological” perspectives which aim at saving the untouched, “innocent” nature from “civilization”, “instrumental reason” and “the mechanical world-view”,<sup>771</sup> on the other, naïve defenses of “culture”, of what “humans have created”, of “Western rationality, enlightenment and progress”, which dismiss ecological perspectives as “ideological” and “primitive”, as “a threat” to “civilization”<sup>772</sup> (op.cit.: 153, 154, 155). Haraway dismiss both “the distance” to nature of the latter, as well as ecologism’s “nature romanticism and nostalgia” (op.cit.: 156). There is no such things as innocent “pure nature”: “In what we have historically referred to as nature, there is power and science, dreams and love, racist and sexist

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<sup>768</sup> See for example Gaarder (1990) and Gressgård (2003). See also 5.4.4 and 5.4.7. Contributors such as Moi (1999) and Mortensen (2002) would probably share this concern, however, but insist that their existential (or ontological) reflections are culturally embedded.

<sup>769</sup> “Turning to/against nature – transformative politics”.

<sup>770</sup> In particular Haraway’s article “The Promises of Monsters. A Regenerative Politics of Inappropriate/d Others”.

<sup>771</sup> Asdal’s example is the works of Donald Worster.

<sup>772</sup> Asdal’s example is Anna Bramwell’s critical analysis in *Ecology in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*.

values” (op.cit.: 156, 157). “Nature” is “a result of our constructions, and it is part of our stories in different ways” (op.cit.: 157). But there is also no such things as “neutral”, “innocent scientific culture”: “The possibility of Western science to see everything from nowhere, is an illusion” (ibid.). There is no way to grasp “Reality from a space empty of culture. Science is a cultural practice”; it is “constructed”, “created and produced” (ibid.). This does not mean that science is simply “ideological”; nature’s “organisms” are “*real* constructions” produced in “discursive processes” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 158).

The crucial question then, is who are legitimate participants in these processes: Who should “be given authority” to talk on behalf of “Nature” in “Science” (op.cit.: 162)? Not only human beings, is Asdal’s answer, echoing Haraway’s “posthumanism” or “antihumanism” (op.cit.: 164). “Subjects and things”, “machines, non-machines, non-humans”<sup>773</sup> and humans should “unite” building “the produced collective we call nature”<sup>774</sup> (op.cit.: 164, 165). This approach will also take care of including humans often considered to be too “close” to nature to take part in “passionless”, “distanced”, “civilized” science; “the pregnant woman, the natives of a threatened rain forest” (op.cit.: 163). This concern is also a feminist concern, Asdal argues: Women have often been regarded as “closer to nature” or as “more nature, than men”; as “the other, passive nature, the object” (op.cit.: 170). Sometimes idealized as “Mother Nature”, other times “reduced” to “biology” – but almost never included on equal footing in the processes in which “Nature” is produced (ibid.). Asdal’s claim is that women need to be included – along with other marginalized humans and non-humans – if we are to produce knowledge that is “friendlier” and “more solidaric”, and “life forms” that are more “just” (op.cit.: 162, 166).

Asdal raises several claims familiar from discussions in previous paragraphs.<sup>775</sup> In this paragraph I wish to focus on her main claim: that feminism as well as science generally needs to approach nature differently, and different from what is allowed for within the parameters of modernity.<sup>776</sup> The philosopher Hilde Bondevik raises a similar concern in her reading of the

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<sup>773</sup> Haraway criticizes Bruno Latour for including only humans and machines in the process producing nature.

<sup>774</sup> This does not imply that other beings should be given the status of human beings. Animals, for example, are not “human beings of less value [...]”; they are other worlds” – they should not be “demystified”, and “cut down to our size” (Asdal 1998: 165).

<sup>775</sup> Consider for example the critique of the modern subject (5.4.4), the discussion on feminism and epistemology (5.4.5), the discussion of the relationship between individualism and collectivism (5.4.8), as well as the discussion of an alternative rationality (5.4.12).

<sup>776</sup> Asdal refers to Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway who are both critics of modern thought. See also for example Elstad (1993), Malterud (1996, 1997, 2002), Greve (1999).

seventeenth-century thinker Anne Conway. Conway criticized the dualisms of Descartes and the mechanical materialism of Hobbes, and introduced a “monist” and “vitalist” alternative (1999: 103). This alternative has inspired present-day feminist theorists such as Carolyn Merchant, author of the influential book *The Death of Nature. Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*, Bondevik notes. Searching for alternatives to “the mechanistic approach to nature and the Western approach to science generally” Merchant returns to the philosophy of the seventeenth-century to find “the roots to the present crisis”, where “the vitalists’ and Conway’s more organic approach to nature, and approach that takes as its point of departure the living nature, not the dead nature” catches her attention (op.cit.: 107). According to Merchant, this approach “points forward towards our times” (op.cit.: 107-108), it may contribute to “an ecological alternative”, and make it possible to escape the “global crisis” (op.cit.: 107, 108). Merchant’s reading of Conway is illuminating, according to Bondevik. She stresses, however, that Conway’s ideas should not be labeled as “specifically female”, even if they have inspired contemporary feminists (op.cit.: 107). Such labeling would end in “essentialism” with regard to “masculinity” and “femininity”, something she “does not wish to encourage” (ibid.). Also on this point, Merchant’s reflections may guide us, however:

Merchant discusses [...] the problem of focusing on something feminine and on nature. Historically, women have precisely been associated with nature, [...] in opposition to man, rationality, culture and science. [...] both women and nature [are] devalued in our culture [however] [...]. And the hope of a more just world, and a world that is in better balance ecologically, can be found, according to Merchant, precisely in a changed attitude to nature as well as to women (op.cit.: 108)

Hence, there are clear similarities between Asdal’s and Bondevik’s proposals of an alternative approach to nature. They criticize attempts to make a sharp distinction between a dead, pre-social nature and the living, social culture, and link the oppression to women, associated culturally with nature, to the oppression of nature justified by Western humanism. Both are, moreover, reluctant to connect their critique to an idea of an alternative female way of ecological thinking. Other contributors make such connections, based on empirical studies of women’s and men’s different relationship to nature. Siri Gerrard and Halldis Valestrand sum up the conclusions of studies of women’s everyday life in the rural parts of the northern region of Norway: “[...] it was women in particular who managed the natural resources”, and they did it “in a way that was compatible with or had a potential in relation to sustainable development”, and in a way different from men (1999: 64). To conceptualize and value this female approach might have far-reaching implications, according to Gerrard and

Valestrand:<sup>777</sup> It makes visible how “knowledge production” is a “political process”, and could change “the notion of knowledge” in itself (op.cit.: 70, 73).

A set of contributors question, however, more or less explicitly, the attempts of feminists to replace the approaches to nature and a natural science of the modern imaginary with different alternatives. There is, for example, a certain opposition against feminist attempts to transform epistemology and methodology (see 5.4.5). There are contributors who are sceptical of attempts to replace the modern humanist notion of the subject with other notions (see 5.4.4). And, there are critics that are, for different reasons, sceptical of attempts to link the struggle for women’s emancipation to ideas of an alternative female way of thinking, more caring, more responsible, more emotional, more solidaric – and more ecological. (see for example 5.4.8, 5.4.11, 5.4.12 and 5.4.13).<sup>778</sup>

## **5.5 The modern imaginary challenged**

### **5.5.1 A summary**

These fifteen arguments all touch upon meta-questions; they raise critique, in one way or another, against some of the fundamental presuppositions, distinctions and standards of the project of modernity. I will try to sum up what is claimed, and highlight how, more precisely, the modern imaginary is challenged.<sup>779</sup>

#### **i) The conservatism of modern thought**

The argument that the thinking of modernity is too conservative, or is, at least, ill equipped to facilitate the kind of changes feminists would need to favor, has many variations. It is difficult to say anything general about how far and in what sense the argument implies a reconstruction of modernity’s standards of critique. Moreover, what characterizes much of the change-talk in the material I have surveyed is, indeed, that it is undifferentiated: It is not always clear what kind of changes the different contributors would defend. There are, however, many more or

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<sup>777</sup> For similar reflections see Nordal (1993, 1996, 1997), Munk-Madsen (1995), Skjønberg (1996a, 1996b), Fyhn (1997, 1999),

<sup>778</sup> See also Asdal’s and Bondevik’s reflections on this point in the elaborations above.

<sup>779</sup> Relying on concepts and distinctions introduced in Chapter 2.



less elaborated proposals to transform modernity's standards of truth and morality, on the assumption that these standards do not adequately conceptualize and facilitate the changes feminists struggle to achieve. Several critics suggest, moreover, that the standards of truth and morality should be considered as interconnected, as well as interconnected with different ethical or political projects, or with aesthetical criticism.

### **ii) Modern history – a history of patriarchy**

The argument that the thinkers of modernity have influenced modern history in an unfortunate way, and that their assessment of modernity is too optimistic, does not necessarily rely on a critique of modernity's standards of critique. The critique is sometimes made, rather, from the point of view of these standards: To what extent the thinkers of modernity have influenced modern history, can be investigated without relying on alternative standards of truth. Whether their influence has been unfortunate or not, can be assessed without relying on alternative norms. However, when the argument occurs in the material I have surveyed, it is often accompanied by a critique of modernity's standards.

### **iii) The modern canon of patriarchal thinkers**

The argument that the thinking of modernity is a patriarchal mode of thinking, is sometimes made within the parameters of this thinking: It is assumed that modernity itself contains standards of critique incompatible with the patriarchal norms reproduced by particular thinkers of modernity. Many contributors suggest, however, fundamental transformations of the standards of modernity: They consider the modern imaginary as a patriarchal imaginary in the sense that its standards of critique do not target patriarchal oppression.

### **iv) The abstractions of modernity**

To argue that one needs to be sensitive to empirical context when implementing moral principles, is compatible with upholding modernity's distinction between standards of truth and rightness. Several authors argue, however, not only for empirical sensitivity in the process of applying moral principles, but also for the principles to be corrected by empirical knowledge: The principles should be 'grounded' empirically.<sup>780</sup> This may be interpreted as a radical critique of differentiating questions of morality from questions of truth. More modestly, moves of this kind could be understood as attempts to correct the descriptions the

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<sup>780</sup> This is Anne Hellum's expression (see 5.4.3).

rightness-idealization is based on, for example descriptions of what a human being is. In both cases what we are dealing with is meta-critique, however: critique of the elaboration of modernity's standards or of the relationship between them. The critique of abstraction underlying ambitions to correct morality empirically, targets, moreover, the idealizations of the thinking of modernity qua abstractions: Several authors dismiss the attempt to address the problem of validity through an articulation of idealized standards (i.e. through abstraction) altogether.

#### **v) Critique of the modern autonomous subject**

The critique of the modern autonomous subject is often articulated as a fundamental critique of modernity's standards of validity. What several contributors are skeptical of is to conceptualize standards of truth and morality in terms of what all would accept considered from a particular abstract perspective, i.e. from the point of view of human beings regarded as – or reduced to – free and equal reasonable persons. It is impossible for human beings to take on this perspective, it is argued; to reason and act as were we detached from our concrete embodiment, from the complex processes of subject constitution, from our embeddedness in social structures and culture. Hence, it is impossible for us from within the human condition to assess claims autonomously in the sense presupposed by the thinkers of modernity. Moreover, was this in fact possible, this would not necessarily be right from a moral point of view: That we, when we consider what is moral should not consider ourselves and our fellow beings as autonomous as the thinking of modernity prescribes (but rather, for example, as dependent), is a claim put forward by several critics.

However, the modern notion of the subject can be criticized and debated on a less fundamental level. One may, for one reason or another, consider modernity's standards of critique as generally compatible with descriptions of human beings as embodied and embedded beings, but question the way these descriptions are made by the thinkers of modernity, i.e. these thinkers' explications of the standards of truth and rightness rest on a set of claims about human beings, and it may be argued that some of these claims are unwarranted. The outcome of correcting modernity's picture of human beings might be a different set of moral norms. For example, several of the contributors argue that the norms to which all would agree in argumentative discourse as persons embedded in asymmetrical relations are different from the norms to which they would all agree as free and equal persons, i.e. as persons granted symmetrical recognition. However, by arguing along such lines, one

might end up by raising more fundamental critique of the modern imaginary's ideas of morality: To claim that we are inevitably embedded in asymmetrical relations is, it would seem, to say that it is impossible for us to assess claims autonomously from within the human condition, the way the thinkers of modernity prescribe.

#### **vi) Epistemology and methodology**

Several of the contributors who address the relationship between feminism and epistemology, argue for a transformation of modernity's truth-idealization, but also of its rightness-idealization. Another tendency in these proposals is not to make a clear distinction between the two: Theories that are regarded as adequate theories about state of affairs are also those theories that are considered to facilitate women's emancipation – and the other way around. Moreover, in these proposal issues of truth and issues of morality are not always clearly distinguished from ethical criticism, political views and even aesthetic criticism. The critical discourse on epistemology is thus a rather undifferentiated discourse, and it questions as such modernity's fundamental distinctions; it fuses what the thinking of modernity consciously separates. However, the proposals differ among themselves when it comes to which changes are envisioned; not all proposals are obviously incompatible with a feminism of the modern imaginary.

#### **vii) Feminist strategies**

A strategic approach to the thinking of modernity is a critique of this thinking, in three senses. First, to approach arguments primarily from the perspective of what is rhetorically efficient is not to take the claims involved, i.e. what the thinkers of modernity say, seriously. Second, this move – not to assess arguments also from the perspective of validity – counters modernity's standards of both truth and morality. Third, the strategic approach challenges fundamental distinctions of the modern imaginary, whether the approach is interpreted as reducing all discourses to pragmatic means-end discourse, or whether it is interpreted as prescribing undifferentiated discourse.

Nothing of this implies, however, that feminists cannot participate in pragmatic discourse without challenging modern distinctions and idealizations; there are also examples of this in the material I have surveyed.

### **viii) The problem of universalism**

Any general dismissal of universalism – to deny that anything can or should be considered universally valid – targets the thinking of modernity in a fundamental sense: Such dismissal is not compatible with subscribing to modernity's standard of truth and morality that are claimed precisely to be universally valid. When authors raise particular kinds of criticism against universalism; when they, for example, criticize ethical universalism or over-generalized descriptions of patriarchy and women's situation, this is, however, not necessarily incompatible with a feminism of the modern imaginary.

### **ix) Individualism and the good community**

That individuals, not collectives or groups, are primary normative units, is a fundamental assumption in the thinking of modernity. In so far as this assumption is challenged, like some contributors do, this thinking is thus radically challenged. To, more modestly, prescribe policies that address the concerns of certain groups or give the assessments of certain groups particular weight, like others do, is, however, not necessarily to question the assumptions of the project of modernity.

Also fundamental to the project of modernity is its reliance on the authority of reason: The standards of what are true and right are linked to what individuals would find reasonable in deliberations. When collectivist concerns inspire contributors to replace the authority of reason with authorities of other kinds, for example our feelings of solidarity and responsibility, they challenge thus the standards of the thinking of modernity. These standards are also questioned when contributors prescribe political orders or human society generally to be based on common values; a comprehensive ethos: Such prescriptions challenge modernity's distinction between the right and the good.

### **x) Equality and power**

Several contributors criticize the norm of equal treatment. To claim that we sometimes need to treat differently situated individuals differently, to treat them as equals, is not necessarily to challenge the presuppositions of modernity. In so far as critics equate a norm of equal treatment with the norm of treating all with equal respect, and deny them both, they question, however, the moral core of the project of modernity. Prescribing equality of outcome in the name of treating everyone with equal respect may be done from within the horizon of modernity. Prescribing equality of outcome disregarding ideas of equal respect and individual

autonomy is, however, to question fundamental presuppositions of this horizon. To say that individual's preferences and assessments are 'false' under present conditions, as some contributors do, can imply challenging, radically, the ideas of individual autonomy and responsibility developed by the thinkers of modernity. This may, however, also be a way for critics to say that individuals cannot, for some reason, be treated as autonomous and responsible individuals under present conditions, i.e. they do not necessarily mean to criticize ideas of autonomy and responsibility from a normative point of view.

Generally speaking, it is not always clear how the different contributors' position themselves, more precisely, on these issues, as the critique raised against the ideas of 'equal treatment', 'equality of opportunity' and 'individual autonomy', is often of a general and sweeping kind.

#### **xi) The public and the private**

To argue that also institutions often referred to as belonging to the private sphere, such as the family, civil society – or indeed markets – should be assessed from the point of view of justice, as many contributors stress, is not necessarily to question the thinking of modernity. A critique of the modern private-public distinction, which disregards the significance of personal autonomy, challenges the thinking of modernity fundamentally, however: The critical standards of modernity are based on ideas of free deliberations among individuals, and presuppose that everyone is granted privacy.

What is true and right according to the thinking of modernity, is what individuals would find reasonable under ideal conditions. When critique of the private-public distinction results in prescriptions about replacing the authority of reason in public deliberations with other sources of authority (for example the values immanent in the practice of mothering, or women's free-floating desires) – as often is the case in the material I have surveyed – the critique challenges modernity's idealizations of truth and rightness. If the argument is, rather, that sources often granted authority in private relations should be granted authority also in public relations, because this can be reasonably argued, the argument is, however, not necessarily incompatible with modernity's critical standards.

#### **xii) Capitalism and patriarchy**

To criticize capitalism and patriarchy is not necessarily to challenge modernity's standards of truth and rightness: Capitalism and patriarchy, as captured by descriptions warranted

according to modernity's standard of truth, can be criticized on the basis of norms found to be just, according to modernity's standard of rightness. There are, however, in the contributions inspired by Marxism and radical feminism that have been analyzed in this chapter, sketches both of a different standard of truth – considered necessary if we are to capture adequately the mechanisms of capitalism and patriarchy – and of a different standard of rightness, i.e. standards that would make us capture the deeper injustices of capitalism and patriarchy.

### **xiii) Rationality, femininity and sentiments**

The attempts to redescribe the rationality of moral assessment and truth-seeking in proposals of a different rationality can, very often, be interpreted as attempts to transform modernity's idealizations of truth and rightness. The critique of the dominance of instrumental rationality, of egoism and narcissism, on which these proposals are based, is, however, not necessarily incompatible with a feminism of the modern imaginary: What deliberating participants in context-transcendent discourses on what is true and right under ideal conditions would agree to as reasonable, cannot simply be equated with what is reasonable according to criteria of means-end rationality and with what would serve all's selfish interests.

### **xiv) The aesthetical transcending the modern**

Aesthetical criticism can be raised and elaborated from within the horizon of modernity. To introduce aesthetical criteria in the institutional discourses of science and politics, or to highlight and elaborate aesthetical dimensions of ethical discourse, also does not in any obvious way conflict with the thinking of modernity. Several contributions make, however, a more general argument; they suggest that aesthetical concerns should make us transform the idealizations of truth and rightness.

### **xv) Below the surface – phenomenology, existentialism, ontology**

To raise empirical criticism against descriptions of human nature or women's situation, or to raise criticism against the more or less articulated moral or ethical subtext of such descriptions, can be done without challenging modernity's scheme of idealizations and discourses. To introduce a new set of descriptions, that are not empirical, and thus not available for scrutiny in theoretical discourse, and also not claims of for example an ethical-existential kind (if they are meant to be 'non-normative'), represents, however, a challenge to the thinking of modernity: Introducing such (non-empirical and non-normative) descriptions,

raise questions about how such descriptions can be assessed, and of whether they are objects of critique at all.

#### **xvi) Modernity, nature and culture**

Critique of the natural sciences and of reducing the rationality of investigating nature to instrumental rationality, can be made on the basis of modernity's standards of truth and morality. What several contributors suggest, however, is that critique of this kind, to be apt, need to transform these standards, i.e. they conceptualize ecological critique as a fundamental critique of modernity. To say, for example, that human and non-humans are to be included on equal terms in processes of assessments, challenge normative ideas of truth and morality as something free and equal human beings deliberate on qua reasonable beings. To say that groups of human beings that have often been considered closer to nature, such as women, are to be included in processes of assessments, is not necessarily in conflict with subscribing to what the thinking of modernity prescribes, however.

### **5.5.2 A brief remark on assessment**

I will have to leave a systematic discussion and assessment of these arguments to a different occasion. Several of the arguments have, however, been touched upon in Chapters 1-4. I will, moreover, return to some of them in Part III of the dissertation.

Furthermore, the summary of 5.5.1 is based on certain indicative assumptions. I assume, for example, that the different arguments we are dealing with here can be explicated in ways that do not necessarily or obviously make them incompatible with a feminism of the modern imaginary, and in ways that more or less radically challenge this imaginary. I try also, even though briefly, to demonstrate how I think this can be done. A more thorough justification of this move, as well as a more thorough explication of how the different arguments might come in different versions, more or less critical of modernity, must be postponed to some other time.

## 5.6 Academic-feminist self-reflection in Norway after 1990 – some characteristics

### 5.6.1 A critical interpretation of modern thought

As suggested by Irene Iveresen in the quotation that introduced this chapter, the recent academic-feminist self-reflection, also in Norway, can be read as a debate on the merits of modernity. The reflexive turn in the Norwegian feminist research field parallels a similar turn in the international field of feminist theory. In both cases, the crux of the debate has been, and still tends to be, the relationship between feminist critique, on the one hand, modernity and its modes of thought, on the other. Several leading figures in international feminist theory defend, generally speaking, a feminism of the modern imaginary,<sup>781</sup> such as Susan Moller Okin, Martha Nussbaum, Seyla Benhabib, Anne Phillips, Nancy Fraser, Jean L. Cohen, Marilyn Friedman, Helen Longino, Elizabeth Anderson and Onora O'Neill. Other leading figures dismiss this kind of feminism, on the basis of various arguments similar to the arguments circulating in Norwegian debates.

There are, however, few engaged defenders of the thinking rooted in the tradition of Enlightenment in Norwegian debates. In Anglo-American feminist discourses critique of modernity has occurred against what some have referred to as a liberal-feminist hegemony (Butler and Scott 1992, Dean 2000). There can be no question of a similar hegemony in the Norwegian debates I have surveyed in this chapter.<sup>782</sup> Only a few contributions defend wholeheartedly a feminism of the modern imaginary.<sup>783</sup> Defending the project of modernity is

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<sup>781</sup> They defend it even if they question specific elaborations of this imaginary from a feminist point of view.

<sup>782</sup> Precisely as during the 1970s, there are very few Norwegian feminists who refer to themselves as liberal feminists (see 5.2).

<sup>783</sup> Clear examples are, for example, Raaum (1995), Børresen (1995a, 1995b, 1998, 1999a, 1999b), Bojer (2001) and Serck-Hanssen (2000/2001). It should be noted that even if the arguments of Seyla Benhabib are subscribed to in several contributions, and, to a lesser extent, those of Nancy Fraser, Anne Phillips and Martha Nussbaum, this does not necessarily imply that the thinking of modernity is defended. Often what is highlighted is not these thinkers' defense of modern thought, but instead the elements in their thinking that are critical of modern thought. In the reception of Benhabib, for example, her critique of liberalism is often stressed, not her intimate reliance on Habermas's discourse ethics. On other occasions, Anglo-American feminists are interpreted as more critical of for example liberal principles than they in fact are (see for example my critique of Mari Teigen and Hege Skjeie's interpretation of Nancy Fraser and Martha Nussbaum in Chapter 8).



exception to the rule, criticizing modernity, even dismissing its basic assumptions, is mainstream. The debate on the merits of modernity in Norwegian feminist theory thus becomes very much a debate between feminists critical of modernity, on the one hand, and the thinkers of modernity as *outsiders*, on the other: Whole-hearted defenders of the project of modernity seldom participate in the debates of feminist theory in Norway; they are seldom *insiders*. In Anglo-American feminist theory the debate on the merits of modernity is, on the contrary, very much a debate *among* feminist theorists; among insiders.

What I say here, is that there are few defenders of a feminism of the modern imaginary in the self-reflective discourse I have analyzed in this chapter. I have not investigated to what extent the empirical inquiry of the research field challenges modernity's standards of validity *in practice*. So far, moreover, nothing is said about the discourses of political feminism. Is perhaps the state feminist model of citizenship a model of the modern imaginary? This will be discussed in Chapter 6.

There are, furthermore, some patterns in the understanding of modernity, as well as some missing patterns, that should be stressed. There do not seem to be systematic differences in reception between male or female contributors, or between generations; men are not less critical of modernity than women, established researchers no less than the recruits.<sup>784</sup> There are patterns in what kind of critical arguments that are raised, however. Established researchers seem, for example, to be somewhat more critical of postmodern or poststructuralist theory than the younger generation.<sup>785</sup> There are, moreover, fewer authors coming from the younger generation who defend communitarian ideas of female solidarity. Among the established researchers many consider establishing a firm defense of such ideas to be essential.

There are also certain patterns in the understanding of modernity along discipline lines: Contributors coming from some disciplines are less critical than others. Generally speaking, the interpretation of modernity and its modes of thinking seems to be more favorable within economics, political science and law than within other disciplines.

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<sup>784</sup> I thank Jørgen Melve who helped me make a list of the contributors' date of birth, their educational and disciplinary background.

<sup>785</sup> I investigate this pattern in more detail in Holst (2001).

### **5.6.2 The Norwegian appropriation of feminist theory**

Several critics have interpreted the turn to feminist theory in the period of self-reflection in Norway as an expression of homogenization and increased Anglo-American and French influence. My investigations support this interpretation to a certain extent:<sup>786</sup> The influence from Anglo-American and French feminist theory is significant. The picture is, however, more complex. Contributors in the period of self-reflection receive their intellectual resources from international feminist theory, but not only. Typically, there is a mixture of Norwegian and international influences, both from feminist theory and from theory not especially framed to address feminist concerns. A good example is Elisabeth L'orange Fürst's dissertation. L'orange Fürst analyzes here what she considers to be an alternative rationality of the female lifeworld.<sup>787</sup> She relies heavily on the contributions of the leading French feminists, such as Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva. She relies, however, also on Norwegian social philosophers, such as Dag Østerberg and Hans Skjervheim, on the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty, on the deconstructive approach of Jacques Derrida, as well as on Hildur Ve's (1999a, 1999b) notion of "rationality of responsibility", Kari Wærness' notion of "rationality of care",<sup>788</sup> and Øystein Gullvåg Holter's (1991, 1997) social form analysis of the interconnections between capitalism and patriarchy.

There is, however, a certain tendency in the younger generation of researchers to rely more exclusively on international feminist theory than the established researchers do. There are also certain differences between authors coming from different disciplines. Contributors to feminist literary theory and philosophy rely, for example, more exclusively on international feminist theory than do, typically, feminist sociologists.

### **5.6.3 A reflexive turn without normative theory**

It is noteworthy, moreover, that the Norwegian academic feminist field has passed through a decade and a half of intense self-reflection, in relative isolation from international debates in moral philosophy and political theory. On this point, the Norwegian case is considerably

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<sup>786</sup> I wish to emphasize, however, that I have not made a systematic comparison of theoretical influences in the research field before and after 1990. An intellectual history of feminist research in Norway is not yet written.

<sup>787</sup> Her proposal is elaborated in 5.4.12.

<sup>788</sup> For a recent discussion, see Wærness (2004).

different from Anglo-American feminism.<sup>789</sup> This is not to deny that positions and contentions in Anglo-American feminism have both triggered and shaped several of the debates in Norwegian feminist self-reflection. The discussions on poststructuralism and on feminist epistemology, two major discussions in the Norwegian research field, are but two examples. The revival of normative theory in Anglo-American feminism has, however, no parallel in the reflexive turn of Norwegian feminism.<sup>790</sup>

## **5.7 Why reflexivity?**

### **5.7.1 Some suggestions**

In this study I have not investigated why the reflexive turn in Norwegian feminist research occurred, and why it occurred when it did. In the following I will, however, comment briefly on some hypotheses.

#### **i) A new generation, a new paradigm?**

The period of self-reflection may be interpreted, with Thomas Kuhn, as linked to the introduction of a new ‘paradigm’, competing with the old paradigm: The reflexive turn may be an expression of a ‘crisis’ in feminist ‘normal science’. What characterizes crises of this sort; when paradigms clash, is precisely increased and intensified debate on meta-issues, on the adequacy of the fundamental concepts, theories and standards of the research field. Commentators have suggested that the increased and intensified debate on meta-issues in the feminist research field can be connected to the introduction of a new postmodern paradigm, and to the entering of a new generation into the research field that supports the ‘new’ against the ‘old’ (Blom 1995, Widerberg 2001, Halsaa 2003). Many researchers’ engagement with postmodernist or poststructuralist theory have no doubt both inspired and significantly shaped the radical questioning of the modern imaginary in the period of self-reflection. It should be stressed, however, that none of the fifteen arguments elaborated in this chapter are exclusively raised on the basis of such theory. The contributors articulate a rich set of challenges to

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<sup>789</sup> Not to mention from feminism in German-speaking areas. The influence from French feminism is significant in Norwegian feminist theory. The works of German-speaking feminist theorists, such as Herta Nagl-Docekal, Angelika Krebs, Gertrud Nunner-Winkler, Herlinde Pauer-Studer, Andrea Maihofer and Beate Rössler, are very seldom referred to.

<sup>790</sup> A similar point is suggested by other commentators, see Slagstad (1994), Skjeie and Hernes (1997), Ellingsæter (1999), Hagemann (2000).

modernity which cannot be reduced to a 'postmodern' challenge. Besides, even if there are generational patterns, they should not be exaggerated. Several of the established researchers are highly influenced by postmodernist or poststructuralist theories.

## **ii) International trends?**

The period of self-reflection in Norwegian feminism parallels a period of meta-debate in international academic feminism.<sup>791</sup> The reflexive turn in academic feminism is a global phenomenon, linked to, among other things, the entrance of Second and Third World feminists in the research field: Non-western feminists have started to question the established perspectives and approaches of Western academic feminism. As a global phenomenon, the reflexive turn is also an expression of certain intellectual trends in the feminist research field, for example many researchers' increased engagement with postmodern or poststructuralist theory which questions fundamental presupposition of feminist politics and scientific practice.

Commentators have suggested that the reflexive turn in Norwegian feminism reflects international trends (Wærness 1995, Bjørhovde 1997, Halsaa 2003). This is a reasonable suggestion. The arguments raised in Norwegian debates are familiar from international debates in feminist theory. In particular Anglo-American and French feminist theory is often referred to and actively engaged with. The Norwegian reflexive turn, has, however distinctive national traits. The Norwegian researchers publish, moreover, seldom on feminist theory in international journals and anthologies published outside Scandinavia.

## **iii) A trend of modern times?**

Increased and intensified reflexivity has haunted other academic fields and disciplines than the feminist research field the last couple of decades. Such developments fit, obviously, well into analyses which point at increased and intensified reflexivity as distinguishing features of late modern societies (Giddens 1996, Beck 2004a, 2004b). It should be stressed, however, that not all disciplines and research fields have experienced a period of self-reflection comparable to that of feminist research.<sup>792</sup>

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<sup>791</sup> For overviews, see Assiter (1996), Arneil (1999), Jaggar and Young (2000), Braidotti and Griffin (2002).

<sup>792</sup> The articles on the development of gender-perspectives in different disciplines in *Forståelser av kjønn* (1992), edited by Taksdal and Widerberg, are illustrative. In some of the disciplines, such as social anthropology, the questions raised in the feminist self-reflective discussions add to similar discussions already going on in the discipline. In other disciplines, such as economics, there is no talk of a reflexive turn.

#### **iv) Reflexivity as academization and de-politicization?**

It has been argued that the period of self-reflection in Norwegian academic feminism is an expression of an unfortunate de-politicization and academization of the research field (Strøm 1995, Wærness 1995, Halsaa 1996a, Holter 1996b, Skotnes 2004). While researchers previously worked empirically and policy-oriented, in close contact with the women's movement and femocrats in state bureaucracy,<sup>793</sup> and in the interest of ordinary women, they are now, it is argued, more concerned with living up to internal academic standards and climbing in academic hierarchies.

It is commonly assumed among commentators that this is a reasonable description of developments in the research field, even though it is a hypothesis that has yet to be investigated. A few things should be kept in mind, moreover. The number of activists in the women' movement has decreased drastically since the 1970s (Halsaa 1996a). There have thus been fewer activists with whom feminist researchers could cooperate. Whether Norwegian feminist research has become more or less policy-oriented is something that has not been investigated in this study, or indeed elsewhere. After having surveyed articles, books, reports, papers and dissertations published after 1990,<sup>794</sup> I am, however, not convinced that this is the case. Much of what has been published in recent years is policy-oriented. That meta-theoretical debate has replaced empirical research and middle-range theorizing is simply not the case.<sup>795</sup>

Furthermore, what kinds of inquiries serve 'the interests of ordinary women', is a complex issue. The questioning of concepts and standards that have made certain groups of women's suffering invisible exemplifies that meta-questioning may very well be in ordinary women's interest. It is, moreover, not self-evident that investigations that 'serve the interests of ordinary women' are genuine investigations. Genuine inquirers, in the feminist research field as well as in other fields of inquiry, should, first and foremost, be faithful to standards of truth and justice, and to the scientific ethos. The influences from values in different parts of the research project should, as far as possible, be explicated and assessed according to standards of reasonableness and 'fairness'.<sup>796</sup>

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<sup>793</sup> See van der Roos' (1996b) on the role of femocrats.

<sup>794</sup> See my analysis of the development in Norwegian feminist sociology from the 1970s to the 1990s (Holst 2001).

<sup>795</sup> See also 5.1.

<sup>796</sup> See Chapter 2.

Whether Norwegian feminist research has become more or less genuine going through the period of self-reflection is yet another issue that has not been investigated in my study. When the intellectual history of the research field has been written, we are, hopefully, better equipped to answer this question.

#### **v) From state feminism to reflexive feminism?**

Finally, it may be connections between other characteristics of the socio-cultural and political setting of the Norwegian feminist research field and the outburst of a reflexive wave. In Chapter 6 I will discuss whether the political state feminist ideology may have inspired self-reflection.

### **5.7.2 The distinctiveness of Norwegian self-reflection: Some interpretations**

#### **i) The critical interpretation of modernity**

Whether there are connections between the normative ideas of the state feminist regime and the distinctive profile of the recent academic-feminist self-reflection, for example its critical approach to modernity, is also a discussion left for Chapter 6. The critical stance towards modernity may, however, have other sources as well. It may be interpreted as a hyper-reaction against the dominance of empirical, policy-oriented research pursued in the research field during the 1970s and 1980s. Many have conceived of this research as empirical research in the spirit of modernity,<sup>797</sup> and assumed, seemingly, that defending a different focus in empirical research, for example a less policy-oriented focus, is incompatible with sticking to the project of modernity.

The particularly critical attitude towards modernity's categories and distinctions in Norwegian feminist theory might also have something to do with which disciplines leading contributors belong to. Contributors coming from economics, political science and law are, generally speaking, more open for subscribing to a feminism of the modern imaginary than contributors engaged with literary, cultural, social and psychoanalytical theory. The latter have, however,

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<sup>797</sup> Cf. Blom (1995), Gulbrandsen (1995), Lotherington and Markussen (1999), Meyer (1999), Mortensen (1999), Bolsø (2002), Egeland (2004a, 2004b), Mühleisen (2004).

dominated the discussions of the reflexive turn,<sup>798</sup> whereas economists, political scientists and scholars of law are in minority. This is very different from state of affairs in Anglo-American feminist theory, where political and legal theorists have been central in framing the debates.

The critics of the thinking of modernity would obviously link their critical stance towards modernity to the validity of their critique; to the reasonableness of their stance: There may be good reasons for feminists to turn their back on the project of modernity. I question, however, this view elsewhere in this dissertation; in my discussions in Chapters 1 to 4, and in my elaborations in Chapter 7, 8 and 9.

## **ii) The national distinctiveness**

Norwegian feminist researchers publish relatively infrequently on feminist theory in international journals. Moreover, even if they have engaged themselves with Anglo-American and French feminist theory, their reliance on concepts and variations of arguments developed in Norway, inside and outside the feminist research field, is significant. That international intellectual influences are tempered by and interpreted in light of national traditions in philosophy and theory, is, however, also the case in other research fields in the social sciences and the humanities, and in Norway more so than in other Scandinavian countries, analysts have claimed (Skirbekk 1992b, Slagstad 1998, 2005). The national distinctiveness of the reflexive turn in Norwegian academic feminism may thus be an expression of more general patterns.

Whether the national elements in Norwegian feminism makes its theorizing richer and more original, or rather lower its quality and provincializes it, is a contested issue. Several commentators stress the value of Norwegian feminist research's national distinctiveness,<sup>799</sup> a few question it (Mortensen, Bjørby, Lie, Brandser and Angvik 2001, Mortensen 2002). The question should, probably, not be addressed in such sharp either-or terms. There are no doubt original contributions to feminist theory in the Norwegian research field, developed on the basis of a blending of international and national intellectual in-puts. Other contributions are, bluntly speaking, indefensibly uninformed.

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<sup>798</sup> Even if they do not necessarily dominate other discussions going on in the feminist research field.

<sup>799</sup> Cf. Leira (1992), Wærness (1995), Holter (1996c), Ve (1999), Widerberg (2001), Halsaa (2003), Hernes (2004).

### **iii) What about normativity?**

The revival of normative theory in Anglo-American feminism has no parallel in the reflexive turn of Norwegian feminism. This counters the homogenization-thesis: Norwegian feminism is not Anglo-Americanized in any straightforward way. The marginal interest in the arguments, approaches and questions of normative theory is indeed peculiar in a research field that is so intimately and explicitly defined as part of a normative project: feminism. The peculiarity may once more be linked to the disciplinary background of central contributors. In Anglo-American debates normative theory has been brought in by political and legal theorists and moral philosophers. The latter have not played a similar role in the reflexive turn of Norwegian academic feminism.



## CHAPTER 6

# STATE FEMINISM AND THE SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP IDEAL<sup>800</sup>

### 6.0 The normative basis of Norwegian political feminism

Helge Hernes introduced the term state feminism in 1987 to describe how feminism might be promoted “from above in the form of gender equality and social policies” (1987: 153).<sup>801</sup> Hernes’ thesis was that feminist interests had been institutionalized on state level during the 1970s and 1980s in Norway: The Norwegian welfare state had gradually developed distinctive feminist characteristics (Skjeie and Hernes 1997: 373). Along with women’s entry into welfare state professions and “the feminization from below among women activists in political and cultural activities”, state feminism had contributed to the development of a relatively “woman-friendly” society in Norway (Hernes 1987: 153). Continued mobilization from below combined with governmental policies from above would contribute, according to Hernes, in making Norwegian society even more woman-friendly. There is a potentially fruitful “alliance” between women and the welfare state, she concluded (op.cit.: 162).

More or less effective attempts to insitutionalize feminist interests through the state have continued throughout the 1990s without major controversy. A recent study of attitudes in Norwegian elites shows that state feminist policies and ideology enjoy remarkable support today, among leading segments of the population (Gulbrandsen, Engelstad, Klausen, Skjeie and Teigen 2002). The discussion in this chapter will not, however, focus on the actual

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<sup>800</sup> Some of the ideas in this chapter (which is an edited and extended version of Holst 2002) were developed in the paper “Feminism, Autonomy and the State”, presented at a seminar at New School for Social Research, New York, March 2001. Previous versions of this chapter have been presented at seminars at the Center for the Study of the Sciences and Humanities, University of Bergen. I thank participants for comments, in particular Gunnar Skirbekk and Anders Molander. I also wish to thank David Plotke, Nancy Fraser, Mala Htun, Hege Skjeie, Helga Hernes, Kari Wærness, Lars-Ove Seljestad, Hilde Danielsen, Christine M. Jacobsen, Randi E. Gressgård, Rune Slagstad and Fredrik W. Thue for discussing different problems raised in this chapter with me on different occasions.

<sup>801</sup> As pointed out by Mona Livholts (2001), Hernes writes about state feminism and the conditions for developing a woman-friendly state already in *Staten – kvinner ingen adgang?* (1982). However, it is in her state feminist essays from 1987 she for the first time systematically elaborate and defend her thesis: that the state-feminist, social-democratic citizenship model is a woman-friendly model.

support of the state feminist model, but on its normative basis or moral grammar.<sup>802</sup> How can this grammar be described? And does it have any weaknesses? Are there aspects of state feminism's normative basis of which we ought to be critical?

My discussion begins with a closer examination of the state feminist, social-democratic project, as it is portrayed in Hernes' *Welfare State and Woman Power. Essays in State Feminism* (1987).<sup>803</sup> Hernes' idea of a woman-friendly social democracy is both a distinct political-philosophical proposal and an interesting contribution to the discussion of the development of welfare-state capitalism. The first part of the chapter presents Hernes' normative and sociological reflections.<sup>804</sup> In the second part of the chapter I discuss what seems to be certain blind spots in the state feminist, social-democratic project. I argue that the project:

- i) suffers from a liberal deficit, and insufficiently recognizes the significance of private autonomy,
- ii) tends to reduce the discussion of political citizenship to a discussion of group representation and gender difference,
- iii) links welfare to employment, the welfare state to the aim of economic growth, social rights to citizens' participation in paid (and unpaid) work, as well as
- iv) the legitimacy of the social-democratic system of rights to the values of Norwegian culture and history, in unfortunate ways.

In the third part of the chapter I will return to my analysis of the reflexive discourses of Norwegian academic feminism (from Chapter 5), and discuss the relationship between these discourses, their occurrence and profile, and the moral grammar of state feminism.

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<sup>802</sup> The expression stems from the title of Axel Honneth's book, *The Struggle for Recognition. The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (1996). Honneth believes that social struggles for a more just society cannot be perceived exclusively as conflicts of interests. They also have a moral grammar – they presuppose normative assessment of the legitimacy of social institutions (op.cit.: xii). In this chapter I will investigate critically the normative basis of the state feminist regime (Slagstad 2004, see also Chapter 5).

<sup>803</sup> According to Dorothy McBride Stetson and Amy G. Mazur, Hernes was the first to use the concept of state feminism as an analytical term. Her works are often referred to in academic contexts, but also in program documents of the United Nations, where the development of "national machineries for the advancement of women" in the member states has long been an important goal (1995: 20).

<sup>804</sup> As they are elaborated in one of her state feminist essays: "The Welfare State Citizenship and Scandinavian Women" (Hernes 1987: 135-163).

## 6.1 Woman-friendly social democracy: Solidaric republicanism

### 6.1.1 From state patriarchy to state feminism

Hernes' optimistic analysis of the development of Norwegian state feminism in *Welfare State and Woman Power: Essays in State Feminism* (1987) differs from her diagnosis in her article "The Transition from Private to Public Dependence" published earlier in the 1980s.<sup>805</sup> In this article Hernes discussed women's relationship to the state, as wage earners, mothers and unpaid care-workers in the family, clients and citizens. As paid workers, women are often directly affected by governmental decisions, because many of them are employed in the public sector. As mothers and unpaid care providers, women depend on public services and benefits. Women are overrepresented in several of the weakest client groups of the welfare state, for example is a majority of those on welfare women. As citizens women have less power than men. Women's representation is lower than that of men in party politics and among decision-makers in the economic sector. All in all, these developments imply, according to Hernes, that women's dependence on the state is increasing. With its institutionalization of "weak influence combined with strong dependence" (Skjeie 1998: 216), the welfare state represents the transition from a private to a public patriarchy (1987: 41).<sup>806</sup>

A number of important contributions from non-Scandinavian feminist research, also from the previous decade, come to similar conclusions as the early Hernes (Fraser 1995, Young 1997, Pateman 1998, hooks 2000).<sup>807</sup> More recent works in Scandinavian feminist research, inspired by Hernes' optimistic turn in 1987, have been less critical of the welfare state and feminist strategies built upon political alliances between women and the state. State feminism and the welfare state have, it is claimed, contributed first and foremost to strengthening women's economic independence and their political influence (Nagel 1998, Christensen and Syltevik 1999, Skjeie and Siim 2000). A few, however, are more skeptical. Harriet Holter has argued that Norwegian society, despite women's increased participation and the diminishing

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<sup>805</sup> It was originally published in *Patriarchy in a Welfare Society* (1984). The article is re-printed in her collection from 1987. I refer to this edition.

<sup>806</sup> This was a common view among Norwegian feminist researchers at the beginning of the 1980s. Harriet Holter describes, for example, the development of the welfare state in Norway as a set of "changes from direct to indirect oppression, among other things as a movement from limited, but real rights for women, to equal, but empty rights" (1981: 227).

<sup>807</sup> Non-Scandinavian feminists' critique of the welfare state reflects their experiences with specific welfare systems, such as the U.S. system, which are very different from the Scandinavian welfare states. Their discussions of the normative basis of feminism are, however, more generally relevant.

“individual dominance of men”, bears traces of male “models of power”, “male principles and values” (1996: 14, 15). Holter means, moreover, that women primarily gain entry into so-called shrinking institutions: “Women [’s increased representation] is limited [...] to social positions that are about to become unimportant” (op.cit.: 32).<sup>808</sup> The Swedish historian Yvonne Hirdman (1990) promotes a similar thesis in her analysis of how ‘the gender contract’ has changed in the wake of women’s entry into Swedish political and public life during recent decades.<sup>809</sup> According to Hirdman, this new gender contract is also based on ‘the genus system’s’ two fundamental logics, however, namely ‘segregation’: the female and the male are made different, and ‘hierarchy’: the male dominates the female. Neither the gender dichotomy nor gender hierarchy have disappeared, despite the seemingly egalitarian re-negotiations of the gender contract: Swedish society is split along gender lines, and women obtain power in spheres and agencies that are dominated by the spheres and agencies dominated by men, and over problem areas that are relatively unimportant compared with those ruled by men.

Both Holter and Hirdman see also woman-friendly developments in Scandinavian societies. Both, however, assess the actual positive effects of the welfare state and state feminism as being less far-reaching and profound than the later Hernes and the more optimistic mainstream of Scandinavian feminist research (see for example Skjeie and Siim 2000). Holter’s and Hirdman’s optimism seems to give rise, first and foremost, to an empirical debate about whether the welfare state *is* “a partnership between the state and women” or in fact “a patriarchal state” (Leira 1998: 180). Does the success story of women’s peaceful revolution in Scandinavia reflect actual state of affairs (Togebly 1994)?<sup>810</sup> An equally important question, in my opinion, is whether state feminism’s approach to citizenship is justified from a normative point of view. Is the type of partnership between the state and women, accepted as a taken-for-granted standard in much Scandinavian feminist social science, worth pursuing in every respect? The answer to this question depends, of course, on

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<sup>808</sup> For example the increase in women representatives in the Storting (Norway’s parliament) becomes less significant when important decisions are made more frequently in the private sector, by largely male-dominated interest organizations or by international agencies where women’s participation is low (Holter 1996: 32). Holter’s thesis that ‘women enter shrinking institutions’ (i.e. institutions that are losing power) was introduced for the first time in 1976. The thesis is criticized in detail by Hege Skjeie (1992).

<sup>809</sup> Skjeie (1998) clarifies the similarities between Holter and Hirdman on this point.

<sup>810</sup> The different assessments of this question have different sources. The discussion between Skjeie (1992, 1998) and Holter (1996) on ‘women’s entrance into shrinking institutions’ reflects, among other things, their disagreement on how ‘shrinking’ can best be measured. This leads to different assessments of whether or not parliament is losing power.

what standard, more precisely, we are talking about. In other words, as a first step, we need to know what characterizes the Scandinavian model of state-women partnership.

### **6.1.2 State feminism, women's professions and women's participation**

Hernes' short definition of state feminism is: a system of gender equality and social policies – state feminism as feminism “from above” (1987: 153). In Norway, gender equality policies have, among other things, centered on drawing up and complying with the Equal Status Act, and on pursuing gender equality through state bureaucracy (‘femocracy’), through especially created governmental structures, such as the Equal Status Council, and through different regional and local structures (Bystydzienski 1995, van der Ros 1996, Skjeie and Hernes 1997). State feminist social policies have centered, on the one hand, on the expansion of nursery schools, public welfare services for the elderly and health care services, and, on the other hand, on the expansion of public support services.<sup>811</sup> State feminist gender equality and social policies, as they have been developed in the Scandinavian countries, represent, according to Hernes, a unique political experiment: “In no other part of the world has the ‘state’ been used so consistently by all groups, including women and their organizations, to solve collectively experienced problems” (1987: 154).

She stresses, however, that the development of state feminism must be seen in relation to feminization from below: “Feminization from below and state feminism from above circumscribe the area of women’s policy” (op.cit.: 136). In Norway women play an important role in the election channel.<sup>812</sup> In addition, they are active in humanitarian and cultural organizations, in new social movements, in issue-related campaigns and, to an increasing degree, also in the public media. Women have less influence in the “national corporate system” which institutionalizes “the interface between the political-administrative system and the market” (op.cit.: 153). They have acquired increased influence in the professional associations of the public sector. Men dominate the trade unions, however, and women are only marginally represented among decision-makers in private business, and in the large organizations that determine the conditions for economic policies. In the long run, through a continued democratization and decentralization of the corporate system, “new actors,

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<sup>811</sup> Examples are maternity leave, one-time payments for mothers without paid work and benefits to single-income providers, see Danielsen (2002).

<sup>812</sup> That is as voters and elected representatives to parliament, in government and in local politics.

especially women” will, however, acquire increased influence, Hernes argues, and “new political areas, especially in the area of reproduction” will have an increased significance (op.cit.: 152).

A third element in the “Scandinavian system” – in addition to the feminization from above and below – is the feminization of the welfare state professions (op.cit.: 160). The expansion of nursery schools, public welfare services for the elderly and public health care services have, together with the development of social support services and welfare bureaucracy, created new employment possibilities for women.

Just as in her article published in 1984, Hernes describes in her reflections of 1987 women – as clients, mothers, unpaid care-workers in the family and wage earners – as being especially dependent on the welfare state. Now she stresses also the citizenship aspect of these roles, however. Hernes sees a potential for client and consumer based power, for example through organized campaigns. Women’s role as mothers and their “continued responsibility for most daily needs” is described as more politicized; “the gender conflict dimension in political life” becomes more significant (op.cit.: 136). Moreover, women have power as wage earners in the welfare state, and, as Hernes notes: “The public sector’s welfare bureaucracies are dominated by women” (op.cit.: 146). Women’s increased bureaucratic power also represents an empowering feminization from below. In addition, Hernes’ analysis of 1987 is more optimistic concerning the possibility of strengthening women’s rights, participation and influence as citizens of the welfare state. The Scandinavian state feminist system is based on an understanding of citizenship that has the potential to include women in “a community of material rights”, in the “politico-legal community”, and in the distinctive Scandinavian “ethical community” (op.cit.: 161).

### **6.1.3 The Scandinavian system and the woman-friendly society**

Thus Hernes (1987) operates in fact with two definitions of state feminism, one narrow and one broad. The narrow definition equates state feminism with gender equality and social policies developed to promote women’s interests. This is state feminism understood as a “regulatory regime” (Skjeie and Teigen 2001). The broad definition of Scandinavian state feminism refers to all three elements mentioned above: Feminization from above, below and

of the welfare-state professions. It is state feminism in the broad meaning which has, according to Hernes, a unique woman-friendly potential. Hege Skjeie puts it like this:

[...] there is no reason to doubt that the participation dimension represents a decisive difference [for Hernes]. If state feminism exclusively refers to political processes that incorporate women's political demands [and not also women as participants], [...] [nothing] distinguishes state feminism from state patriarchy (1998: 217).

As I discuss below, the participation dimension – especially different forms of feminization from below – is a crucial feature of the social-democratic citizenship ideal outlined by Hernes.<sup>813</sup>

Another question is what type of normative status Hernes actually gives the state feminist system. Should it be seen as an instrument helping to pave the way for the woman-friendly society, or should the system be understood as the political organization of a woman-friendly society *par excellence*? Does state feminism represent Hernes' feminist ideal, or is feminism about something more than an effective institutionalization of the state feminist system? Hernes certainly does not imply that the Scandinavian system as it is today has fulfilled all of its woman-friendly promises: "Sweden and Norway embody a state form that may open the way for their transformation into women-friendly societies and polities, which are reasonably just in terms of gender" (1987: 135). Citizenship in the Scandinavian countries is, nevertheless, still gender biased: "After 20 years of equality policies at various levels, women and men's life patterns have changed, but they still differ, and women still have considerably less societal power" (op.cit.: 141).

Much indicates, moreover, that Hernes has a more demanding citizenship ideal than the social-democratic, state feminist ideal. In another essay she stresses that "[s]tate feminism must not be confused with women's full citizenship, it cannot replace a full mobilization of women, their interests and preferences".<sup>814</sup> 'Women's full citizenship' appears to require something more than a woman-adapted social democracy. The realization of a woman-friendly society demands, she says, "fundamental changes in social institutions that are designed to uphold central societal values" (op.cit.: 138). Were these changes to become fundamental enough, they might possibly alter the Scandinavian system's institutional design

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<sup>813</sup> This is why I refer to it as a republican citizenship ideal.

<sup>814</sup> Translated from Skjeie (1998: 216).

and ideas of citizenship. Hernes does not define the normative relation between the Scandinavian system and this ‘fundamentally’ transformed woman-friendly society in more detail, however. What is feminism about beyond the realization of the promises internal to the Scandinavian system? How does the ideal of ‘women’s full citizenship’ differ from the social-democratic citizenship ideal inherent in Scandinavia’s societal development? And might there not be normative facets of the Scandinavian system that neither feminists nor others should defend? I will return to these questions throughout the chapter.

There is no doubt, moreover, that Hernes considers a woman-friendly, social-democratic citizenship model preferable to other citizenship models in the political-philosophical tradition, and that she rates the Scandinavian state feminism system above other real-world political systems. At least in these senses, she defends the normative basis of Scandinavian’s state feminism against competing alternatives. This is the case with most analyses made of state feminism and social democracy in Norwegian feminist sociology and political science (for example Christensen 1997, Skjeie and Hernes 1997, Nagel 1998, Leira 1998, Skjeie and Siim 2000, Brandth and Kvande 2003). None of these poses fundamental critical questions concerning the validity of a woman-friendly social democracy as a political ideal.<sup>815</sup> This chapter can be read as an attempt to scrutinize this underlying consensus in the literature on Norwegian state feminism more closely.

One comment may be appropriate in this context. It is possible to speak of political ideals, and at the same time recognize the importance of what John Rawls refers to as the circumstances of justice. These circumstances arise in situations where there are conflicts over limited resources: “[...] whenever persons put forward conflicting claims to the division of social advantages under conditions of moderate scarcity” (Rawls 1999: 110).<sup>816</sup> Conflicts of interests and reasonable disagreements are part of *conditio humana*: In human societies, the circumstances of justice are inescapable. The feminist project cannot therefore be formulated as a utopian philosophy of reconciliation, as an ideal of the end of politics. Instead, feminists should focus on how conflicts and disagreements may be regulated in the most just – also gender just – way. As Hernes accurately puts it: That a society or a state is woman-friendly,

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<sup>815</sup> Perhaps Hans Skjervheim is correct when he says: “Therefore one sees that when a socialist party transforms into a social-democratic party, it becomes un-ideological. The purely practical-political questions are what come to the fore; the ideological questions are left to students and working-class youths who are still green behind the ears” (1992: 180).

<sup>816</sup> See also 2.2.2.



must not tempt us into believing that “all difficult decisions or all forms of scarcity have been eliminated” (2001: 49).<sup>817</sup>

#### 6.1.4 The social-democratic ideal of citizenship

In *Welfare State and Woman Power* Hernes outlines a distinct ideal of citizenship, more specifically, a feminist re-formulation of “the activist, participatory, egalitarian ideal of social-democratic citizenship” (1987: 139). Citizenship is defined as the rights and duties of the citizens of a state, both in relation to the state and towards each other (op.cit.: 135). Hernes’ interpretation focuses primarily on the rights of citizens. She differentiates, along with the historian T.H. Marshall, between civil, political and social rights, between what she calls “guarantees of personal autonomy”, “participatory rights” and “material entitlements” (op.cit.: 138). Different ideals of citizenship can be classified according to their different systems of rights, and their relationship to the idea of common “values” (op.cit.: 137).

*The republican ideal* of “the full-time citizen”<sup>818</sup> places great emphasis on collective opinion and will formation and political participation, and has been less concerned, traditionally, with social equality and the protection of citizens’ private lives. One example is the Greek polis: “In Aristotle’s Athens the public and private identity merged together”: “[...] patriotism and solidarity were [...] one and the same. [...] there were no loyalties that conflicted with those of life in the polis” (op.cit.: 139). Consequently, the development of a republican system takes place within the framework of a common cultural and ethical horizon. Both in the Greek polis, in the Roman Republic and later in Machiavelli, this horizon inspired the cultivation of typical masculine virtues.

*The liberal ideal* of “the part-time citizen” has focused less on participatory rights than on guaranteeing “the right to the personal integrity of body and mind” and private autonomy: “Private pursuits of salvation and capital accumulation are more important than life in the political community”– and more important than social equality (ibid.) Neither can liberal

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<sup>817</sup> This reference is taken from the article: “Hvor kvinnevennlige er de skandinaviske velferdsstatene?” (“How woman-friendly are the Scandinavian welfare states?”), *Kvinneforskning* 3/2001, which is mainly a summary of important points from *Welfare State and Woman Power*.

<sup>818</sup> Hernes herself does not refer to the ideal of the full-time citizen as being republican. This is, however, a common term used to discuss the tradition she refers to in this passage (Pettit 1999). Also Skjeie and Siim (2000) elaborate the Scandinavian citizenship model as republican.

society be thought of as a community based on particular values; “self-realization and the good life [is placed] outside the public realm” (ibid.). With reference to Carol Pateman’s critique of liberalism Hernes claims, furthermore, that “liberal values and institutions deny women equal citizenship” (ibid).<sup>819</sup>

*The Marxist ideal* of citizenship is interpreted as an anarchistic ideal. The aim of the working class taking over the means of production, and of Marxist prescriptions of egalitarian distribution of economic resources, is to receive more leisure time for all, as well as the abolition of the state and of citizenship itself. Consequently, Marxism idealizes a society without collective political activity, “public commitment and common ideals” (ibid).<sup>820</sup> Marxist political theory must also be regarded as masculine, according to Hernes, because Marx assumes that mobilization occurs via the market and cannot directly come into existence through confrontations between the state and its citizens: Marx’ approach makes it impossible to envisage women’s political mobilization “through their various ties to the state” (op.cit.: 160).

*The social-democratic ideal*, which captures important aspects of the Scandinavian societal model, is introduced as a more attractive fourth citizenship ideal. The social-democratic ideal has several republican characteristics. It stresses, like the republican ideal, political participation. The social-democratic goal is “the democratization of all areas of social life” (op.cit.: 144). In line with the republican ideal, the political unit is a cultural community based on shared values: “[...] an ethical community with shared meanings, identities and symbols” (op.cit.: 161). In addition, the social-democratic ideal is republican in the sense that it does not make a sharp distinction between the state and society (op.cit.: 153), the private and the public: “Institutional interdependence and a ‘public/private mix’ rather than a ‘public/private split’ and thus the absence of clearly defined institutional boundaries are among the hallmarks of Scandinavian historical development” (ibid.) In contrast to republicanism, however, the

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<sup>819</sup> It is unclear how Pateman’s (1988) revolutionary political ambitions, her critique of the state and of contractual relationships generally are compatible with state feminist reformism and optimism. Pateman delivers, for example, a sharp and thorough critique of the capitalist labor contract, while the ideal of social-democratic citizenship ideal assumes that high employment, brought about through the market, together with the welfare state, is a strategy to increase people’s well-being (1988: 39-76, 116-153). What would Pateman say to a system; “state feminism”, which is “neither more nor less than the result of negotiations and ‘contracts’ between the state and women” (Hernes 1987: 162)?

<sup>820</sup> On this point, Hernes agrees with the post-Marxist tradition that has criticized Marxism for lacking categories to assess the legitimacy of political institutions. This critique is often tied to analyses of Marxism’s communitarian and totalitarian tendencies (Benhabib 1986, Cohen and Arato 1995). Hernes, on the contrary, seems to fear that people in a communist society would have to bear too much freedom.

social-democratic ideal emphasizes social equality and material security for its citizens: The republican community needs a social basis. Finally, the social-democratic ideal has had, at least traditionally, a patriarchal subtext in common with the other three ideals. The social-democratic citizen has been perceived to be a “citizen worker”:

HIS rights, identities and participation patterns were determined by HIS ties with the labour market and by the web of associations as well as corporate structures that had grown up around these ties. [...] Until recently women were mainly *citizen mothers*, protected and supported in this role by a paternalistic state (original emphasis, op.cit.: 140).

Social democracy has nevertheless, according to Hernes, contrary to the other competing ideals, a considerable woman-friendly potential. In Scandinavia social democracy’s traditional patriarchal subtext is about to change due to the state feminist project. A promising woman-friendly moral grammar may be found in Scandinavia’s societal development.

### **6.1.5 Social and political citizenship and the value of community**

The thesis of a woman-friendly ideal of social-democratic citizenship is Hernes’ original contribution to feminist political philosophy. What distinguishes her social-democratic ideal from the republican ideal is first and foremost the focus on social rights. Some of these are universal, but “many material rights are contingent, at least in size, on labour market participation” (op.cit.: 144). In addition “there is an underlying assumption [...] that universal welfare state services and transfers should not exceed those earned in the labour market” (op.cit.: 143-144). The Scandinavian system’s ambition to guarantee its citizens a certain material standard has consequently not been unconditional. Such guarantees have been tightly linked, and partially subordinated, to the aim of increasing productivity; “the social-democratic policy assumption” that “only full employment and growth can save the welfare state” (op.cit.: 155). Another important social-democratic goal is to secure the political rights of citizens, but broader political participation – through a greater diversity of forms of political participation – than what republican political philosophy prescribes. In Scandinavia an attempt to reach this goal has been made through the development of an institutionally defined political citizenship, a “participatory corporatism” (op.cit.: 145), as an important supplement to the election channel. Participatory corporatism is characterized by a wide-reaching interface between the state, civil society and families, institutionalized both

nationally and locally, where citizens are included as far as possible in negotiations and decision-making processes. This fluid political situation is marked by decentralized, fragmented discussion- and decision-making processes, by “institutional interdependence” (op.cit.: 153), by ambiguous relations of influence and power and blurry divisions between the private and the public, which may lead to governance problems and “leadership crisis” (op.cit.: 159). Another important question is whether the individual’s private autonomy “is sufficiently protected in a system that sets such a high premium on participation” (op.cit.: 145). All in all, however, the social-democratic system is assessed in positive terms. It provides increased possibilities for participation, creates legitimacy around political decisions and includes new groups of actors and political areas, especially because representation- and decision-making structures are uniquely linked to “political and social movements which have been the main source of political innovation” in Scandinavia in the past century (op.cit.: 154). As Hernes elaborates in another passage:

The historical basis of citizen involvement is to be found in the waves of social movements that have formed Scandinavian history since the middle of the nineteenth-century, movements that were based on direct participation, but that later were absorbed into the representative structure, only to be followed by new waves of movements (op.cit.: 139-140).

This quotation also illustrates a more general point. The social-democratic citizenship model claims to reflect Scandinavian societal development and culture. This culture can be described as national and homogenous – it makes sense, for example, to speak of Norway as a national ethical community – and as being deeply and emotionally internalized amongst its citizens; “*the principle of coordination*” is a “*deeply felt community (Gemeinschaft)*”, and “*habits of the heart*” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 161). The culture builds, moreover, on positive attitudes towards social equality and “*strong bonds of solidarity*” with the other members of the community (op.cit.: 161). In addition, this “*altruistic impulse*” is expressed as loyalty, support and a sense of duty (ibid.), not as a minimum concession from actors who first and foremost follow their own selfish interests (op.cit.: 141).

### **6.1.6 Towards a woman-friendly social democracy**

What then about the woman-friendly potential of the social-democratic ideal? In what way is the state feminist project about to transform the social-democratic system of rights and its value basis? State feminism has to some degree made use of social democracy’s idea that

certain social rights ought to be universal. There are obvious woman-friendly implications of giving everyone, regardless of gender, the right to basic material security. Social rights in Scandinavia have, however, also become more woman-friendly alongside a clear recognition of women's role as mothers, and of the societal significance of women's unpaid care work:

The recent political mobilization of Nordic women has enabled them to conceptualize the battle for equality in terms of gender specificity and difference rather than gender neutrality (op.cit.: 135-136).

Social democracy has been able to link social rights to situations, activities and roles that are particular to women's lives. For example, "a political struggle going on between women and men, for the right to count certain types of unpaid work as a legitimate basis for welfare entitlements" has taken place (op.cit.: 144). The key to an improvement in women's social circumstances lies, above all, in the recognition of the special aspects of women's life situations: "The challenge for these homogeneous societies is in fact to design a gender equality policy that allows for pluralism and gender difference while guaranteeing equality" (op.cit.: 162-163). The political right to participation in the Scandinavian system has also become more woman-friendly through the state feminist project, because women have acquired the same rights as men, but, more importantly, as a result of a stronger recognition of gender difference: "The legitimation of gender differences has given an important impetus to women's participation in the public sphere" (op.cit.: 136). The social-democratic cultivation of political citizenship into a participatory corporatism, as in Norway, has, in addition, a particularly woman-friendly potential. State feminism can be read as an attempt to develop a corporative and democratic form of governance that also takes into consideration women's life situation and feminist demands. Feminization from above has contributed to re-defining, in a woman-friendly direction, the existing regulatory regime of representation and decision-making in the corporative channel, with the help of special national and local structures for promoting gender equality, the Equal Status Act, various kinds of gender equality policies – and policies sensitive to gender difference. Feminization from below has above all been about including women, women's organizations and women's professions in institutional negotiations both centrally and locally. Both have contributed to a stronger recognition of gender conflict and gender politics as part of the political agenda. A system characterized by institutional intermingling and a fluid division between private and public spheres is structurally adapted to accommodate the gender perspective and women's liberation, Hernes argues:

The separation of private and public, personal and community aspects of life in most Western societies is usually regarded as one of the greatest stumbling blocks for the emancipation of women. Scandinavia is a deviant case in this respect (op.cit.: 162).

The development of woman-friendly participatory rights and material well-being in Scandinavia is also dependent on certain cultural conditions. With time women have to a large degree become incorporated into the national solidaric community, into “*folkhemmet*”<sup>821</sup>, which guarantees the social-democratic system of rights (original emphasis, op.cit.: 161).

### 6.1.7 Citizenship under welfare state capitalism

Hernes introduces the ideal of social-democratic citizenship as an alternative to the established citizenship ideals in political philosophy. *Welfare State and Woman Power* contributes, however, also to a more concrete debate on the characteristics of welfare state capitalism, inspired by Jürgen Habermas’ theory of modernity (op.cit.: 156-158).<sup>822</sup> A number of Habermas’ analytical concepts are adopted, such as his descriptions of the mutual interdependence between different institutions and specific roles within the institutions; the client, the consumer, the citizen and the worker (ibid). However, Hernes disagrees with some of Habermas’ most important conclusions. She criticizes, for example, his notion of a sharp divide between the system (“the public administrative system and the private market”) and the lifeworld or everyday life (“which consists of the public sphere of opinion formation and the private sphere of intimacy and the family”) (ibid); “the assumption that state and society form distinct and even dichotomous categories for social discourse and interaction” (ibid.). This type of dichotomy leads to, according to Hernes, two serious problems. First, it reduces economic production to system activities. This makes invisible women’s production of welfare services in the lifeworld, and, consequently, how women’s activities as mothers and unpaid care-workers are deeply integrated in the political economy of welfare state capitalism. Second, it becomes difficult to explain how meaningful political activity can take place within the framework of the welfare state, and not only in the publics and civil society of the private sector:

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<sup>821</sup> “The people’s home” is a well-known slogan used by Swedish social democrats in the 1930s.

<sup>822</sup> Hernes refers to Habermas (1981a): *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns* and Habermas (1985): “Die Krise der Wohlfahrtsstaates und die Erschöpfung Utopischer Ideen”, *Die Neue Unübersichtlichkeit*.

In the light of Scandinavian historical developments one must at least consider the possibility of the formation a political identity within the legal-administrative system. This is especially relevant in the case of women, who have so many different points of contact with the state (op.cit.: 158-159).

The development of the welfare state should not be analyzed as a colonization of the lifeworld, where “the uncontrolled expansion of state and market power [has] [...] increased the system’s control over us and limited our own control over our lives and our capacity for self-reflection” (op.cit.: 157), where we are reduced to clients, consumers and workers, and where the citizenship role is undermined. Habermas’ political and cultural diagnosis of the welfare state tends to be too pessimistic, Hernes summarizes. The same goes for general trends in international feminist literature on the welfare state, which do not take seriously the fact “that women’s client status and their dependence on – or rather integration into – the public distribution system contains the seeds of a new citizenship status” (op.cit.: 155-156).

## **6.2 Critical perspectives on state feminism and social democracy**

### **6.2.0 Woman-friendly social democracy: A summary**

Consequently, Scandinavian social-democratic ideals stress:

- i) the significance of democratic participation in political decision-making processes, especially through a democratic-corporative system based on a broad network of contacts between the state, civil society and families,
- ii) citizens’ material well-being, guaranteed through a high level of employment and the social rights of the welfare state, and
- iii) the significance of an ethical solidaric community that ensures political and social citizenship.

In addition, Scandinavian social democracy, despite its traditional patriarchal subtext, is about to be made more woman-friendly through the state feminist project:

- iv) Women are incorporated into the national ethical community; their political citizenship is strengthened particularly by the emphasis on gender differences and women’s representation;

their social citizenship is guaranteed, partly by universalizing social rights, partly by adapting them to the typical life situations and daily lives of women.

There are, in my opinion, some normative problems connected with this political ideal. Where are its blind spots? I shall make four points.

### **6.2.1 Social democracy and private autonomy: The liberal deficit**

Social democracy is characterized by a particular political and social citizenship, a “special interplay between participatory and material rights” (op.cit.: 93), what Skjeie and Siim refer to as “the two large inclusions” in recent Scandinavian history (2000: 347). In the introduction to *Welfare State and Woman Power*, Hernes describes the woman-friendly society as a feminist version of this political and social citizenship: “[A] woman-friendly state would enable women to have a natural relationship to their children, their work, and public life” (op.cit.: 15). There is no reason to doubt that societal democratization and the welfare state have contributed to making Scandinavian women better off in many ways when “we compare ourselves with women in other parts of the world” (Hernes 2001: 48), or to underestimate the importance of political and social rights. Modern systems of rights also contain, however, a third category of rights, namely our civil rights: The welfare state and democracy must be institutionalized under the rule of law, as a *Rechtstaat*. Civil rights should protect our private autonomy, our moral right to a negatively defined domain where we can freely act and express ourselves.<sup>823</sup> Together with the demand for political and social rights, and after a time also cultural rights, the demand for civil rights and private autonomy has been struggled for in what social philosopher Axel Honneth (1996) refers to as ‘struggles for recognition’. The feminist ‘struggle for recognition’ is also concerned with the struggle for the individual woman’s right to a room of her own. In a woman-friendly society women ought to be given the opportunity to develop a ‘natural relationship’ to their ‘children’, to their ‘work’, and to ‘public life’, but also *to themselves*. When Hernes writes that our private autonomy is perhaps not “sufficiently protected” in the Scandinavian system (op.cit.: 145), she draws thus attention to a problem that ought to be taken seriously by feminists. Especially because, as philosopher

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<sup>823</sup> The right is described as a right to a negatively defined domain of expression and action because it refers to our right to (negative) freedom *from* illegitimate restrictions. The relationship between negative and positive freedom (*to*), and between the formal right to and real opportunities to act and express oneself freely, is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9.



Anita L. Allen points out, women often experience more illegitimate restrictions as private persons than men do:

There is an unequal distribution of privacy and autonomy in our society. Women [...] have too little of the privacy and private choice they need to live up to their potential as the equals of men (2001: 35).

This makes the demand for private autonomy an issue for feminism. For feminist political philosophy it becomes a crucial task to examine how normative concepts of autonomy and private life should be formulated, if they are also to recognize women's integrity as private persons.<sup>824</sup>

*Welfare State and Woman Power* devotes too little attention, in my opinion, to the moral significance of the individual's right to autonomy in personal matters. One expression of this insufficient attention, is the somewhat one-sided normative discussion of the institutional interconnections and the rubbing-out of the distinction between public and private spheres in the Scandinavian system. Generally speaking, Hernes describes 'the public/private mix' that characterizes Scandinavian social democracies as something positive, as a woman-friendly opportunity: It is easier to follow up the feminist slogan of 'making the personal political' in a society where the divide between the personal and the political is in flux (op.cit.: 153-154, 161-162). This is a reasonable hypothesis. However, in a system where private and public spheres, personal and political issues, are interwoven, it can sometimes also be more difficult for the individual to demand the right to private autonomy – the right to approach life's small and large issues on the basis of one's own preferences and evaluations, independent of prevailing public opinions.<sup>825</sup> As Hernes observes, "Scandinavian political culture and institutions offer a greater variety of public citizen roles – *if not private roles* – to both women and men than most other cultures do" (my emphasis, op.cit.: 147). I believe it is important to discuss this feature of the Scandinavian system as a significant problem. A system that has grown out of a homogeneous ethical community, based on a strong sense of duty between the members of society, is a system based on collectivist values. Such values may have contributed to the growth of the system of social rights in Scandinavia. It is less likely that they form the best cultural safeguard against normalization and violations of citizens' private autonomy.

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<sup>824</sup> See Chapter 9.

<sup>825</sup> One should not use this freedom, however, to infringe upon the rights of others (see Chapter 9).

The liberal tradition is the political and philosophical tradition that has stressed most consistently the importance of the citizen's right to a negatively defined domain of personal freedom.<sup>826</sup> In Hernes' discussion the liberal citizenship ideal is generally described as the opposite of a woman-friendly social democracy: "[...] liberal values and institutions [...] deny women an equal citizenship" (my emphasis, op.cit.: 139). Even the liberal demand for "personal integrity of body and mind, and certain forms of personal autonomy" appears mildly suspect in her presentation: It is concerned with nothing more than protecting "private pursuit of salvation and capital accumulation" (ibid.). To be sure, liberal interpretations of the notion of autonomy stress the individual's right to economic freedom. In the liberal tradition there are, moreover, contributions that equate the freedom of the individual with *homo economicus*' freedom of contract, and question the legitimacy of redistribution of goods (Nozick 1974). All the same, Hernes' interpretation of liberal ideas of freedom and rights are unreasonably reductionist. Representatives of egalitarian liberalism, such as John Rawls and Ronald Dworkin,<sup>827</sup> have developed a sophisticated defense of political rights and social redistribution. The thinking of Rawls and Dworkin is not essentially women-unfriendly. Egalitarian liberalism should, on the contrary, be integrated in the normative basis of feminism.<sup>828</sup>

Hernes' reflections on Habermas' theories on modernity and welfare-state capitalism are in many ways enlightening. She correctly points out the dangers in considering the distinction between the system and the lifeworld as a distinction between different institutions; as being similar to the distinction between material and symbolic reproduction. This approach makes invisible the material reproduction in the lifeworld, such as women's unpaid care-work in the family. Moreover, it underestimates the potential for citizenship and political opinion formation in a situation like that in Scandinavia, where the state – and therefore 'the system' – and civil society enjoy a relatively large numbers of contacts. The distinction between the

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<sup>826</sup> The significance of private autonomy is also recognized, however, in recent republican works which, like Hernes, focus on participatory rights and the sovereignty of the people. Philip Pettit criticizes what he calls "populist" republican thought that defines freedom quite simply as political participation: "Democratic control should certainly be regarded as important in the [republican] tradition, but the importance comes, not from any definitional connection with liberty, but from the fact that it is a means of furthering liberty" (1999: 30).

<sup>827</sup> Key works include Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* and Dworkin's *Taking Rights Seriously*. Rawls and Dworkin's liberalism is based on Kant's moral philosophy. Robert Nozick's (1974) economic liberalism takes Locke's contract theory and defense of private ownership as its point of departure. It is important to differentiate between these two branches within the liberal tradition.

<sup>828</sup> Consider my use of Rawls in other chapters. Egalitarian liberalism should also be integrated in the normative basis of socialism (as suggested by for example Roemer (1994), but also by Rawls (2001) and Kymlicka (2002).

system and the lifeworld should first and foremost be viewed as a distinction between two different principles of societal integration that function in both ‘private’ and ‘public’ institutional contexts. On these points, Hernes’ analyses coincide with the feminist criticism of Habermas, as it is expressed for example by Jean Cohen (1995) and Nancy Fraser (1995).<sup>829</sup> Both Cohen and Fraser fear, however, like Habermas, welfare state paternalism:

[...] when welfare regulations, employing criteria of equal treatment in an attempt to secure an actual equality in living situations and power positions, achieve this goal only under conditions or with instruments that, as far as the presumptive beneficiaries are concerned, also severely *limit* the vulnerable areas in which individuals can autonomously pursue a private life plan (original emphasis, Habermas 1999: 416).

Here Habermas re-articulates the liberal concern: Welfare-state systems can acquire a shape that threatens the individual citizen’s private autonomy. Systems that try to create a material basis for freedom of action may instead produce new forms of dependency (“the possible gain in the material capacity to act changes into a new dependency” (ibid.). A similar liberal-feminist concern is that the loss of autonomy that results from normalizing welfare arrangements can affect women in particular, because women form the welfare state’s largest client group. Welfare-state policies are often two-faced. One example from Norway is the right to maternity benefits: On the one hand, this right has contributed to strengthening the economic position of large groups of women. On the other, because the right is tied to the mother’s participation in paid work before birth, it inspires women to subject themselves, for financial reasons, to a regime of paid work that places considerable restrictions on how the individual organizes her daily life.<sup>830</sup>

What mechanisms can be developed as protections against a welfare state paternalism that values certain ways of life above others? Hernes’ republicanism makes her stress the importance of broad political participation. This is highly significant. The welfare state becomes normalizing and illegitimate if different groups of women, with different concepts of

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<sup>829</sup> According to Cohen, and contrary to what Fraser asserts, Habermas does not equate the system-lifeworld division with the distinction between material and symbolic reproduction. Cohen, however, agrees with Fraser that Habermas formulates, wrongly, the division between system and lifeworld as a division between different institutions. This criticism has many similarities with Axel Honneth’s (1985) criticism of Habermas. Habermas considers this criticism to be based upon an incorrect interpretation of his ideas: His notion of the lifeworld is a pragmatic notion (introduced in an analysis of the pragmatic conditions for communication), not a sociological one (1995: 370).

<sup>830</sup> If the mother does not have a paid job before birth, she has the right to a one-time payment, but this is at a much lower level, see Danielsen (2002).

the good life, are not given a chance to participate in political discussions and decision-making processes.

However, it is important to be clear about the limitations of the republican solution. Collective democratic opinion and will formation should *not* be regarded as a replacement for private freedoms. One can mobilize against welfare state paternalism by developing a political citizenship. However, clients are also citizens who should acknowledge their civil rights and private autonomy in addition to their political rights. Socio-political systems that infringe on women's private autonomy, do not become more legitimate because they function within the framework of a system, such as the Scandinavian one, where women have considerable influence over the formulation of social policies, for example through participatory corporatism and through women-dominated welfare-state professions. It is important to acknowledge the mutual connections, the "reciprocal references" between private and political autonomy (Habermas 1999: 417).<sup>831</sup> The relationship between liberal rights and republican ideals are mutually constitutive. In *Welfare State and Woman Power* Hernes correctly couples women's increased freedom with the development of democracy and participatory rights. This kind of analysis, which has been central to feminist political theory, has undoubtedly inspired Habermas when he analyses challenges for gender-equality politics.<sup>832</sup>

[...] no regulation, however sensitive to context, can *adequately* concretize the equal right to an autonomous private life unless it simultaneously strengthens the position of women in the political public sphere and thereby augments participation in forms of political communication that provide the sole arenas in which citizens can clarify the relevant aspects that define status (original emphasis, Habermas 1999: 426).

Recognition of women's right to private autonomy presupposes that women are able to participate on an equal footing in political discussions on how this right can be concretized and delineated. The opposite, however, is also the case. To reverse Habermas' chain of analysis: Women's political demands which are formulated through public discussions are not genuinely representative, if women are not guaranteed their private autonomy. Without such a right, without the individual woman being afforded an domain in which she can express herself and act freely, and thus develop into a unique person different from all others, a number of relevant aspects, which ought to be taken into consideration when political

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<sup>831</sup> See Chapter 9.

<sup>832</sup> Habermas refers to Iris Marion Young, Seyla Benhabib and Martha Minow (1999: 562-563).

demands on behalf of women are to be formulated and discussed, will become suppressed from the very outset. There is a deep internal connection between the aim of making “all areas of social life” democratic and a “sufficient” protection of our “individual autonomy” (Hernes 1987: 144, 145).

## 6.2.2 Political citizenship and the representation of women

Hernes links woman-friendly political citizenship to representation, in particular to the representation of women as a group. Political group rights that are gender-based, such as different types of quota systems, are legitimate, according to Hernes, because women have specific experiences and interests, especially as mothers and unpaid care-workers. Also these experiences and interests should be represented where political alternatives are discussed and decisions are made. Skjeie and Siim point out a dilemma attached to gender differentiated citizenship ideals: “[...] the emphasis on women’s experiences ‘as women’ tends to tie women conceptually to ‘motherhood’ and thus to enforce their maternal role” (2000: 352). Feminist strategies that stress women’s difference can end up producing repressive maternal stereotypes of what women ‘are’, what they can do and what they want. All “pluralism”, individual and cultural difference between women, is not captured solely through a recognition of “gender difference” (Hernes 1987: 163).<sup>833</sup> This is also the case regarding pluralism between men. In a situation where several groups of men challenge hegemonic masculinity by, among other things, participating in care-work and by linking their masculinity to care-giving, cultural stereotypes linking care too intimately to motherhood, will eventually be discouraging, especially if they are given political importance.<sup>834</sup>

Besides, feminist strategies that stress women’s difference can result in concealing social conflicts and power relations between individuals and groups of the same gender. It would, however, be incorrect to claim that the Scandinavian system does not recognize social inequalities between women as a problem. Hernes’ ideal is “a woman-friendly state [...] where gender based injustice is to a large degree eliminated without leading to greater inequality in other areas, for example between groups of women” (2001: 49). An important

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<sup>833</sup> Compare with Hernes’ conclusion: “The challenge for these homogeneous societies is in fact to design a gender equality policy that allows for *pluralism and gender differences* while guaranteeing equality” (my emphasis, 1987: 163).

<sup>834</sup> Men should be included and made responsible in the political arenas where normative regulation and policies of child-care and care for the elderly are discussed.

challenge then is to clarify how egalitarian considerations of this kind may be reconciled more specifically with state feminism's strong focus on women's similarities and common interests. How a gender-differentiated political citizenship can be reconciled with the existence of individual and cultural diversity, is a question that has scarcely been raised in Scandinavian debates on state feminism and social democracy, until recently. Skjeie and Siim (2000) believe that the dilemma can be solved with the help of principles of political representation which do not take as a starting point essentialist notions of social groups,<sup>835</sup> and which combine principles of representation with procedures of communicative opinion and will formation that respect the individual participant's autonomy.<sup>836</sup> Such an approach makes problematic the linking of political rights to a basis of common female experience, but also, perhaps to a greater degree than Skjeie and Siim themselves recognize, other traits of the social-democratic citizenship model. To start with: If the ideal is actually democratic representation and communication, it also becomes critical to discuss both normative and institutional conditions for democratic *communication*, not only for democratic *representation* (op.cit.: 353). A clarification of normative conditions for communication will raise a number of questions, concerning the relationship between rationality and feelings, communicative and strategic rationality, needs and interests and needs and interest interpretation, language and experience, rhetoric and argumentation, legitimacy and power in public discussions. A clarification of institutional conditions will raise the question of how communicative principles for social integration with roots in the lifeworld can be institutionalized through a set of different publics. It is rather unclear what roles communication, the public sphere and independent social movements are supposed to play in the state feminist system (Halsaa 1996).<sup>837</sup> This is, however, a central question. To believe that political struggles, such as the feminist, can be carried out by means of gender differentiated interest representation and strategic negotiations alone, would be to commit an "instrumental mistake", to borrow a term from Hans Skjervheim's (1976) classical criticism of the Norwegian regime. Second, if the ideal is a communicative democracy that respects the individual participant's autonomy, this implies, as I see it, that the feminist struggles normatively considered, should not be prejudged either in a difference-feminist or in an equality-feminist direction. If women's self-

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<sup>835</sup> Such concepts wrongly presuppose that all members of a group have common 'objective' experiences and interests.

<sup>836</sup> Skjeie and Siim base their reflection on Anne Phillips' and Iris Marion Young's political theories.

<sup>837</sup> By independent social movements I mean movements that either cannot or will not orient their activities toward the political agenda of the corporative channel. Halsaa (1996) analyzes in particular the challenges and problems of the independent women's movement and grass-roots feminism in the state feminist system.

determination is a categorical imperative,<sup>838</sup> in private as well as in public contexts, equality- and difference-centered policies ought to be considered as situation-based strategies that are more or less able to realize this goal. The adequacy of legislation, welfare systems or political procedures, which are respectively gender neutral or gender specific, can only be decided when it becomes clear whether they hinder or promote women's autonomy (Pauer-Studer 2000: 248-283). This analysis already underlay Simone de Beauvoir's freedom-based feminist analysis in *The Second Sex*: The attempt to promote equality and solidarity must never undermine the first ideal of the French Revolution, namely the freedom of the individual.<sup>839</sup> Infringing the freedom of human beings, infringes their humanity, Beauvoir asserts. Feminist projects should be formulated in accordance with such humanistic perspectives.

### **6.2.3 Employment, production and social rights**

Material security and social redistribution are important features of the social-democratic citizenship ideal. The social dimension is to be realized partly through a high level of employment, partly through universal social rights, partially through women-specific social rights,<sup>840</sup> and partly through social rights brought about by participation in paid and unpaid work. Will such a combination of measures actually secure social redistribution and the material security of citizens? The answer depends on several factors. If high employment is made one of the primary goals, as in the Scandinavian system, the degree of redistribution and economic security will be dependent on the job market. Today's labor market is influenced in part by large – and in Norway as in other OECD countries, increasing – salary inequalities. The employment society is not moving in an egalitarian direction. Neither is it a given that participation in the labor market secures material security for the individual. In a situation where the labor market is liberalized, for example, and salary determination is to a large degree market-based, we could reach a situation where on the contrary parts of the active workforce could have very low salaries, and even fall below the poverty line.<sup>841</sup> Claims that high employment leads to welfare and equality therefore rests on the premise that the labor

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<sup>838</sup> Skjeie and Teigen (2001) describe today's state feminist regulation regime as regulated by "the categorical imperative of gender balance". In Chapter 8 I argue against their principle of gender balance.

<sup>839</sup> Toril Moi reflects on this in her introduction to the Norwegian translation of Beauvoir's book. Moi's reflections make visible how discussions on whether *The Second Sex* has an equality-feminist or a difference-feminist tendency, have unfortunately overshadowed Beauvoir's thoughts on feminism and freedom. Beauvoir's existentialistic notion of freedom is, however, problematic.

<sup>840</sup> Typical examples of the latter are maternity leave and one-off benefits for mothers without paid work.

<sup>841</sup> As in the U.S. (Mink 1998).

market is to some extent politically regulated. For those who believe that egalitarian citizenship ideals can be best realized through achieving full employment, it becomes important to discuss how such regulations can be formulated, and what decision procedures ought to be institutionalized to deal with questions relating to “justice at work” (Shapiro 1999: 143-195).

The socio-political consequences of the social-democratic goals of full employment and economic growth, are somewhat uncertain. These goals are also problematic, however, when seen in the light of present-day ecological challenges. The task of contemporary welfare states is to secure a just redistribution within the framework of a sustainable economy, where production, employment and consumption have to adapt to nature’s ability to endure. A reasonable social system of rights should, in my view, take into account, additionally, a situation where a stable high percentage of the population has no connection to the labor market. Several considerations point towards this: If the development of the Norwegian economy is to coincide to a lesser or greater degree with development within the OECD-region in the future, it is likely that unemployment will increase. It is important to construct welfare systems that are prepared for such a future scenario. Even today groups that are outside the labor market suffer because a succession of welfare benefits are tied to participation in paid work: Exclusion from the labor market is one of the most important causes of poverty in Norway today (Backe-Hansen 2001).

Women dominate the groups that are excluded from the labor market. Single mothers and women from minority backgrounds without paid work, are greatly overrepresented in Norwegian poverty statistics. These are women who spend a lot of time and energy on unpaid care work. Hernes’ critique of a citizenship ideal based on the *citizen worker*, leads to a defense of linking the earning of welfare rights not only to participation in paid work, but also to participation in societally important unpaid work. This seems fair from any reasonable conception of justice, even though this type of reform would be difficult to carry out, also in Norwegian society, where unpaid care work is acknowledged as valuable (i.e. as having value) only to a limited degree (Holter 1997, Christensen and Syltevik 1999). Such rights ought, however, to be tied systematically to the activity, to unpaid work, and not to the gender that carries it out. Making a connection between social rights and unpaid work would no doubt improve women’s economic situation, but it ought not to be perceived exclusively as a



woman-specific right.<sup>842</sup> The principle of every individual's right to equal moral respect does, however, make it reasonable to argue that each and everyone of us has the right to basic material security, independent of our paid or unpaid contributions,<sup>843</sup> for example in the form of an unconditional basic income. Analyses of this sort challenge, radically, the social-democratic connection between work and welfare.

#### **6.2.4 Community values and social-democratic citizenship**

*Welfare State and Woman Power* ties the development of the social-democratic citizenship ideal to the deeply felt national and ethical sense of community found in the Scandinavian countries. "The altruistic impetus", duty and feeling of solidarity among members of society explains "the stability of the Scandinavian system" (Hernes 1987: 141). This can be interpreted as being a claim about a *causal* relationship: The existence of certain cultural norms in Scandinavia can contribute to explaining the growth of the social-democratic system of rights. It is, however, also a claim about the *legitimacy* of the Scandinavian system: The social-democratic citizenship model receives its particular qualities from the superior values and virtues that characterize Scandinavian culture and historical development. The history of Scandinavian development told in *Welfare State and Woman Power* is marked by a considerable moral involvement. The conception of Scandinavian history is almost teleological: Social democracy and state feminism emerge as the natural high-point in a historical development marked by progressive social movements and countercultures – which have been integrated into an ever 'friendlier' state.<sup>844</sup> In addition, Scandinavian societies of today will progress further still if they simply follow their own progressive historical logic – if we do not allow the distinctive Scandinavian solidarity to fade away (ibid.).

Both the historical elaboration of and the communitarian justification for the social-democratic system of rights raise a few questions.<sup>845</sup> One is how a state feminist social democracy can become institutionalized in cultural contexts other than the Scandinavian one,

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<sup>842</sup> Some important rights, however, tied for example to pregnancy, will be *de facto* women-specific.

<sup>843</sup> This can, for example, be said to follow from Rawls' (1999) concept of primary goods and of Amartya Sen's (1993) capability approach.

<sup>844</sup> Fredrik W. Thue (1995) discusses the Norwegian historian Ernst Sars who suggests that *Venstre* (the Liberal Party in Norway) "represented the historically necessary consummation of Norway's self-realization as a nation". Social democracy plays a not so different role in *Welfare State and Woman Power*, even though Hernes' account is less influenced than that of Sars by Hegelian metaphors and reconciliation-philosophical tendencies.

<sup>845</sup> Communitarians believe that a society's political system reflects – and ought to reflect – the society's common ethical horizon. For a more complete definition, see Fjørtoft (2002).

if its development is so tightly bound to the Scandinavian countries' historical development and political culture.<sup>846</sup> Perhaps it is the case that one should look more optimistically in the light of Scandinavian historical development at the possibilities for democratization and increasing the political power of citizens through the state (op.cit.: 158-159). However, such optimism presupposes that similar democratizing possibilities may also be found in capitalist welfare-state societies with a different historical development from that in Scandinavia. To what extent are the democratization and feminization of political and social citizenship in the Scandinavian system dependent upon a specific historical development, which other states cannot easily copy? To what extent, for example, can a woman-friendly participatory corporatism become institutionalized in a nation with a different political tradition from that of Norway?

Another question is whether the descriptions of an especially positive moral grammar in Scandinavian history and tradition in *Welfare State and Woman Power* are somewhat exaggerated. Modernity in Scandinavia is a story about the growth in civil, political and social rights, the breakthrough of new social movements, and the integration of new social groups. Yet, Scandinavian history is also a story about the expansion of the state and the market, weaker possibilities for democratic governance, the consolidation of old forms of power and the establishment of new ones, the reproduction of social inequality, cultural normalization and exclusion of those who are different. The consequences of modernization are ambiguous, even in the Scandinavian countries.

A third question is whether it is necessarily particularly ideal that a "political-legal community" should be organized with its starting point in a relatively homogenous national "ethical community" (op.cit.: 161). A state founded on cultural homogeneity and a common ethical horizon can come to oppress alternative cultural considerations and individual diversity. In modern pluralistic societies it is problematic, both in the moral sense and in practice, to promote certain ethical views and ideas about the good life through the use of governmental power.

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<sup>846</sup> This problem is discussed in several contributions in Stetson and Mazur (1995). For example Jean Robinson asks in her article on the developmental characteristics of state feminism in Poland, "Women, the State, and the Needs for Civil Society", about the following: "Does the literature on state feminism presume a particular relation between state and society, one that is seated on the assertion that the state has been created out of the collection of practices and discourses embedded in liberal democratic histories and the existence of a civil society that enables various groups to articulate their interests and compete over power?" (1995: 204).

It is also rather unclear how Marshall's modern system of rights can emerge out of a tight value- and solidarity community. As Robert E. Goodin (1987) points out in his analysis of the welfare state's political philosophy, such a system of rights cannot *logically* be derived from solidarity and a perceived fellowship between members of a society. An obvious illustration is the position of women in Norwegian society. It seems unreasonable to assert that Norwegian women were not included in the national ethical community before they gained the right to vote in 1913 or various welfare rights after World War II. Women were probably considered already in 1814 to be both caring subjects and romantic objects that contributed to 'the altruistic impetus' in Norwegian culture, without their receiving the right to vote for that reason. Moreover, Goodin points out that there are no clear *empirical* connections between *Gemeinschaft*-relationships and the development of the modern system of rights.<sup>847</sup> For example, it does not seem that a reduction in social rights necessarily weakens the solidarity bonds between members of society to a significant degree: "[...] cutbacks that have happened in Scandinavian welfare programs over the recent years seem not to have done any noticeable damage to the sense of community in those nations" (op.cit.: 107).<sup>848</sup> In the U.S., communitarian arguments about societal responsibility and solidarity enter into conservative arguments against universal social rights, and for a charity-based welfare system. Goodin's third point is that there are other and better ways of justifying people's rights than appealing to citizens' national solidarity and sense of community. Human rights can, for example, be justified with reference to the basic norm of equal respect. What the political theorist Jodi Dean (1996) calls "the solidarity of strangers",<sup>849</sup> i.e. the solidarity with those who do not belong to one's own 'ethical community', has become even more important in a situation characterized by globalization processes, where social relations that cause injustice, exploitation and oppression are established across state borders. Such developmental features are the reasons feminists need to be more global in their thinking on justice, and challenge the normative status of state borders in the same way as they have challenged the borders between the private and the public sphere. Onora O'Neill writes in an essay on feminism and globalization:

We rely on numerous transnational economic and political processes and institutions, and so cannot consistently insist that justice (conveniently for the developed world) stops at state

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<sup>847</sup> It is important not to forget that the development of the modern system of rights coincides with the development of *Gesellschaft*.

<sup>848</sup> Recent analyses seem to confirm Goodin's impression, see for example Stjernø (2005).

<sup>849</sup> This is the title of her book.

frontiers, any more than we can rely on women's rationality and their productive contribution and then argue that justice (conveniently for some men) stops at the edge of a supposed 'private' sphere, whose existence and demarcation are in fact presupposed in defining a 'public' sphere (2000: 158).

As pointed out by Hernes in her recent reflections, "the internationalization and globalization of the nations in which we live and of our existence" is a crucial challenge for feminism in the future (2001: 52).

### **6.3 State feminism and the period of self-reflection**

Is it reasonable to believe that normative facets of the state feminist regime can have inspired the reflexive turn in Norwegian academic feminism that was traced and analyzed in Chapter 5? And, more specifically, is it probable that the significant critical interpretation of modernity characterizing the reflexive turn can have something to do with dominating citizenship-ideas in the Norwegian system? What are the connections between the moral grammar of a state feminists system and the self-reflection of its feminist academics?

Different hypotheses come to mind:

i) Feminists might not raise much critique in a state feminist system, because its women-friendliness makes critique superfluous. This has, however, not been the case in Norway. The field of feminist research, in which feminist critique of different kinds has been raised, has expanded significantly after the 1970s (i.e. in the period of the development and consolidation of the state feminist system), assessed relative to the number of contributions and contributors.

ii) Feminists might not debate standards of feminist critique in a state feminist system, because the standards of feminism set by the women-friendly state are accepted as valid, and meta-debates are considered unnecessary. There might, however, be debate on whether the state-set standards are in fact lived up to, and, if many reckon they are not, on how they might be better fulfilled: The critique raised in a state feminist system might be mostly of an *immanent* kind. And it is the case that most of what has been written, even in what I have

referred to as the period of self-reflection in the Norwegian research field, has expressed critique of the latter kind: Meta-debates do not dominate the agenda of the field. They are, however, significantly present.

iii) Feminists might debate standards of feminist critique in a state feminist system, because the standards of feminism set by the women-friendly state are not accepted as valid in all respects by all, so meta-debates are considered necessary. Several of the contributors to the reflexive turn of Norwegian academic feminism link their meta-critique to a critique of Norwegian political feminism; to the concepts and standards of the state feminist regime.<sup>850</sup> This critique of state feminism is in turn linked to a critique of the project of modernity, because many critics regard state feminism as a regime in the spirit of modernity:<sup>851</sup> Postmodern as well as communitarian critics of state feminism in the Norwegian research field tend to fuse their criticism of the state feminist regime with a critique of the project of modernity.

As the analysis in this chapter suggests, this might, however, be somewhat of a misconception. The normative blind spots I have elaborated in the previous paragraphs, are referred to as 'blind spots' relative to my critical yardstick; a feminism anchored in the normative horizon of modernity.<sup>852</sup> The normative perspectives of Norwegian state feminism should not, as several critics do, be conceived as simply expressing this horizon. I have, on the contrary, criticized the normative basis of this feminism from within this horizon.

Several of the contributors to the reflexive turn of Norwegian academic feminism defend indeed the standards of the state feminist regime.<sup>853</sup> My point here, however, is that defending Norwegian state feminist standards cannot simply be equated with defending a feminism of the modern imaginary.

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<sup>850</sup> See for example Bjerrum Nielsen (1995), Gulbrandsen (1995), Davidsen, Solli and Waaler (1996), L'orange Fürst (1997), Martinsen (1997), Christie Mathiesen (1998), Meyer (1999), Mortensen (1999), Birkeland (2000), Annfelt (2000), Monsen (2000), Borchgrevink (2002), Bugge Tenden (2002), Loga (2002), Markussen (2002), Danielsen (2004).

<sup>851</sup> Consider, for example, Siri Meyer (1999), one of the researchers of the research project of Power and Democracy (commented on in Chapter 4 and 8), who connects her radical critique of the project of modernity to a critique of the Norwegian regime, assuming the latter is a regime in the spirit of modernity.

<sup>852</sup> See also Chapters 2, 7-9.

<sup>853</sup> I have already mentioned the sociologists and political scientists who have studied Norwegian state feminism empirically (see 6.1.3).

The precise status of my claims here should be stressed. Helga Hernes explicates the underlying normative and political ideas of the Norwegian state feminist regime. I have, however, not investigated to what extent actual state feminist policies are expressions of these ideas. To do so; to investigate the relationship between state feminism as political philosophy and real-life state feminism will be crucial in any assessment of Scandinavian state feminism as a feminist model system. The four blind spots of state feminism's political philosophy highlighted in this chapter suggest a place to start a balanced but critical investigation of its merits.



# **PART III**

## **Elaborations**



## CHAPTER 7

# RICHARD RORTY, FEMINISM AND MORAL UNIVERSALISM<sup>854</sup>

In 1990 Richard Rorty held The Tanner Lecture of Human Values with the title “Feminism and Pragmatism”. In the lecture he attempts to demonstrate that “pragmatic philosophy might be useful to feminist politics” (1998a: 206): “[He] is addressing feminists as a suitor with a marriage proposal”, as one commentator puts it.<sup>855</sup> Rorty believes that feminism is about giving “re-descriptions” of the gender relationship: The path to a “less painful future” where “men do no thank God [...] they were not born women”, comes through the use of language (“creative uses [...] and misuses of language”) in ways that touch us (“change instinctive emotional reactions”) (op.cit.: 204, 207, 224). Feminism cannot be justified with reference to a norm of treating everyone as equals (“treat them on par”) independent of gender (op.cit.: 217). I will examine his argument against moral universalism.<sup>856</sup>

Rorty is an anti-realist. He wants us to stop searching for knowledge about “the Way the World is”; “drop the appearance-reality distinction in favor of a distinction between beliefs that serve some purposes and beliefs that serve other purposes” (op.cit.: 206).<sup>857</sup> To reject moral universalism follows from this anti-realism. “[If] we drop questions about the Way the World Is, [we] [...] drop the Ideas of the Nature of Humanity and of the Moral Law” (Rorty 1998a: 206). This conclusion is based on the following argument: Moral universalists are moral realists; “someone who thinks that true moral judgments are *made* true by something out there in the world” (op.cit.: 205). The typical “truth-maker” is “the intrinsic features of human beings *qua* human” (ibid). The typical truth-making “intrinsic feature” is “Reason” (op.cit.: 217): Reason is our “reality-tracking [...] faculty” (op.cit.: 208). If we cannot say that

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<sup>854</sup> This chapter is an edited version of the paper “Richard Rorty’s Marriage Proposal”. The paragraph at the end of the chapter (Exkurs: Richard Rorty and Nancy Fraser) is developed further in Holst (forthcoming b). I thank Petter Nafstad, Gunnar Skirbekk, Olav Korsnes, Anders Molander and Hanne Marlene Dahl for comments. I also wish to thank Jon Hellesnes, Audun Øfsti, Jodi Dean, Albrecht Wellmer, Wolfgang Kuhlmann, Oddvar Storebø, Ellen Mortensen, Tone Bleie and Randi E. Gressgård for discussions.

<sup>855</sup> Nancy Fraser (1991: 259).

<sup>856</sup> This is a more thorough discussion of some of the topics raised in Chapter 2. Consider also 5.4.7.

<sup>857</sup> As an implication of this anti-realism, he asks feminists to stop raising impossible questions about “the accuracy of their representations of women’s experience”, and instead “see themselves as *creating* such experience by creating a language” (original emphasis, Rorty 1998a: 212).

something in the world *is* – something we cannot do – we also cannot say that human beings *are* something in particular, for example rational, but unless human beings *are* rational we cannot in turn say that something is morally right. Because then there is no “object” – reason – “that makes true moral judgments true” (op.cit.: 206). There is no longer any basis for saying that “some traditional occasions of revulsion *really* are moral abominations and others only appear to be”; or for thinking of “moral progress as an increasing ability to see the *reality* behind the illusions created by superstition, prejudice, and unreflective custom” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 205). In the following I will scrutinize this argument.

1)

Rorty describes the history of humankind as a continuation of the history of evolutionary biology (op.cit.: 206).<sup>858</sup> From this it follows that “the only intrinsic features of human beings are those they share with brutes – for example, the ability to suffer and inflict pain. Every other feature is up for grabs” (op.cit.: 205). Therefore, something about human beings *is*: Not everything is up for grabs. Rorty believes that to assert that something is, however, is not the same as asserting that something is true. When we assert that something is, we assert implicitly that we can justify that something is, not that we can justify that something is true; “the universal desire for truth is better described as the universal desire for justification” (Rorty 2000: 2); “once you understand all about the justification of actions, including the justification of assertions, you understand all there *is* to understand about [...] truth” (original emphasis, Rorty 1998b: 21). By justifying Rorty means to give reasons (ibid).<sup>859</sup> When we assert that something is, we implicitly assert that we can give reasons for our assertion. If an audience accepts our reasons, the assertion is justified for this audience. Rorty stresses, however, that we do not know whether all possible audiences would have accepted our reasons, and if we had known that all possible audiences had accepted our reasons, this would not make the assertion true, only justified for all possible audiences (ibid).

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<sup>858</sup> In “Feminism and Pragmatism” there are “individual outcasts” that “band together” in “clubs”, “groups” or “shared practices”, and “masters” who oppress them or gradually accept them, so that “the practices (of the) outcasts” become a part of “the practices of the common culture” (op.cit.: 223, 224). The struggle between collectives of “outcasts” and “masters” are to be conceived as “evolutionary struggles”: “The history of human social practices is continuous with the history of biological evolution, the only differences being that [...] memes (turns of speech, terms of aesthetic or moral praise, political slogans, proverbs, musical phrases, stereotypical icons) [...], [competing] with one another for the available cultural space [...], take over the role of [...] genes” (op.cit.: 206).

<sup>859</sup> “The true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of our belief, and good, too, for definite, assignable reasons” (Rorty 1998b: 21).

Rorty is correct that in practice we always justify assertions for specific, concrete, historically situated audiences, and that we do not know how other audiences might react to our justifications. This does not mean that the reasons we present are not meant to be valid reasons for other audiences than the one we are faced with, or that the audience we are faced with, if it had accepted our justifications, would not believe that other audiences also would have to accept them. Albrecht Wellmer puts it like this:

Even if the justification always is justification for somebody at a given time [...] the justification of assertions and beliefs from the perspective of those, who put forward or accept such justifications, is necessarily meant as the justification of a context-transcending truth-claim. Truth is claimed for what is asserted; and the only way to redeem such claims is to justify the assertion. To make a sincere assertion or to justify a belief would not be what it is if it were not connected with the understanding that the assertion or belief could be acceptable to any sufficiently competent or enlightened person (2001: 14-15).

Here Wellmer claims both that our justifications of assertions are meant to be context-transcending, that the audience<sup>860</sup> we are faced with who considers an assertion to be justified, considers it justified in a context-transcending sense, and that to consider an assertion as justified in a context-transcending sense – as justified for all possible audiences of ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ – is what we mean when we say we regard an assertion to be true.<sup>861</sup> Rorty rejects this and similar arguments.<sup>862</sup> He believes that:

- a) This is a flawed description of what we *actually* mean when we say we regard an assertion to be true.<sup>863</sup>
- b) The concept of truth *should* not be understood like this.
- c) If we by true assertions mean assertions that can be justified for all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’, true assertions do not necessarily represent *reality*.<sup>864</sup>

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<sup>860</sup> Rorty’s notion of audience reflects the problematic communitarian tendency in his thinking; “his rhetoric of audiences tends to obfuscate the heterogeneous character of at least modern communities and audiences: that is their internal differences regarding beliefs, vocabularies and standards of argumentation” (Wellmer 2001: 6). See also Fraser (1989: 104, 1991: 264).

<sup>861</sup> To consider an assertion as true in this sense does not mean that one precludes that it later can prove itself to be false: All empirical assertions are fallible. However, the reason why an assertion we consider to be true today, can prove to be false in the future, is not that future audiences will not be able to find the same reasons convincing that the present audience does; that “justification is relative to audience” (Rorty 1998b: 21): “Other people (other audiences) may come upon new arguments, new evidences, new ways of speaking, or new theories, in the light of which our current justified beliefs might turn out to appear as questionable or false. Appear to whom? Not only to new audiences, but, ideally speaking, to us as well (if we were in the position and were ready to respond to these new arguments, evidences or theories)” (Wellmer 2001: 3).

<sup>862</sup> For a similar argument, see Habermas (2000).

<sup>863</sup> See for example Rorty (1998b).

<sup>864</sup> For a comprehensive explication of this (classic) philosophical point, see Rorty (1980).

Re. a)

There are a number of different conceptions of truth. In a philosophical context there are, however, few who would call an assertion true if it could not be presented reasons why it should be regarded as true, or if it could only be presented reasons that a particular audience would accept: There is considerable disagreement among philosophers about *which* reasons lead us to believe that an assertion is true,<sup>865</sup> there is less disagreement on whether a true assertion is an assertion we can justify as true for all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’. Those who, in a philosophical context, believe that the notion of truth should be understood differently, seldom use the notion of truth in philosophical contexts for other purposes than for the purpose of arguing that the notion of truth should not be used in philosophical contexts. Among these are Rorty. Furthermore, whether Rorty’s notion of truth is more adequate than Wellmer’s notion of truth, or *visa versa*, is not an issue of how many philosophers prefer Rorty’s notion over Wellmer’s.<sup>866</sup> This is an argumentative issue.<sup>867</sup>

Re. b)

Rorty argues for an exclusively “commending [...] and cautionary use” of the notion of truth:

The reason there is less to be said about truth than one might think [...] is that terms used to commend or caution – terms such as good!, true!, false!, way to go! and watch it! – do not need much philosophical definition or explication (1998b: 21).

However, if we are not going to call assertions true that we believe can be justified based on reasons that all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ would accept, we still need another term to characterize such assertions. We need this not only because many actually believe there are such assertions (see re. a). But because assuming that what we assert can be justified this way, that is in a context-transcending sense, is a constitutive condition for

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<sup>865</sup> One reason may be that the assertion is in line with our sense impressions. Another reason may be that it is consistent with other assertions we hold to be true. A third reason may be that other ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ hold the assertion to be true. A fourth reason may be a combination of these reasons.

<sup>866</sup> Perhaps Rorty would agree with me that Wellmer in his account captures how many philosophers understand the meaning of regarding an assertion as true. Rorty’s point is perhaps that most people use the notion of truth in line with his instructions (2000: 4): His approach is so to say more in line with common-sense, if not with current philosophical conceptions. That the notion of truth is in line with common-sense does not, however, mean that it is adequate.

<sup>867</sup> The-most-philosophers-argument and the common-sense-argument are relevant, but are in no way decisive arguments in this connection. Both philosophers and most people can be mistaken. We need to ask why they believe what they believe (for example about what truth means), in order to evaluate whether their reasons for believing what they believe are warranted.

asserting anything at all: If one “makes a sincere assertion”, one assumes that what one asserts can be justified in a context-transcending manner – or one is doing something else than asserting (or one is “asserting” something one would not seriously assert) (Wellmer 2001: 14):

[...] the concept of truth is expressive of a constitutive trait of our practice of making and justifying assertions. The context-independence of true makes explicit, what the implicit point of our making and justifying assertions always-already is (ibid).

This condition for asserting – why not refer to it as the *truth*-condition? – is constitutive, because one, if one denies it, commits a performative self-contradiction (or does not assert that one denies it). A performative self-contradiction is a contradiction between the content of an assertion and what one assumes when one asserts it (“zwischen dem *Inhalt einer Proposition* und dem *selbstbezüglichen* – impliziten oder performativ expliziten – *intentionalen Inhalt des Aktes des Vorbringens der Proposition* im Rahmen eines argumentativen Diskurses” (Apel 1996: 22). When Rorty asserts that we do not, when we assert something, assume that what we assert can be justified by reasons all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ would accept (that “justification is relative to audience” (1998b: 21), he either entangles himself into a contradiction of this kind: He asserts something (that justification is not context-transcending) that contradicts what he presupposes when he asserts (that what he asserts can be justified in a context-transcending sense). Or he is not asserting something he seriously believes he can justify (he is not participating in argumentative discourse).

There is reason to believe that Rorty would reject this line of reasoning from two angles. He would, first, claim that the argument of performative self-contradiction lacks rhetorical force: “I do not think that there are many clear examples of such a charge [of performative self-contradiction] being taken to heart” (2000: 8). Second, he would claim that his assertion that justification is relative to audience also is an assertion which justification is relative to audience. Therefore, he does not commit any performative self-contradiction: He does not assume that the assertion that justification is relative to audience can be justified with reasons acceptable to all possible audiences (he does not assume what the content of the assertion denies). This does not mean that he does not seriously assert that justification is relative to audience, or means the reasons he presents could not convince many people. We may very-well say that he argues, but not if what we by ‘arguing’ mean a context-transcending

argumentative discourse where one assumes, when one asserts, that what one asserts can be justified with reasons all participants in discourse would accept.

However, Rorty does not think the argument of performative self-contradiction lacks rhetorical force in all contexts. He himself presumes a variant of this argument when criticizing postmodernism: “[The] postmodernist rhetoric of unmasking” is described as “self-contradictory” and “internally inconsistent”:

Many self-consciously postmodern writers seem to be trying to have it both ways – to view masks as going all the way down while still making invidious comparisons between other people’s masks and the way things will look when all the masks have been stripped off (1998a: 209, 211).<sup>868</sup>

Arguments can, moreover, not be considered exclusively from a rhetorical perspective, as “a good tool for persuading a particular audience”, on the basis of whether it “works” when introduced for a particular audience; “win[s] [...] it over as it were” (Wellmer 2001: 4, 5). They cannot, because a purely instrumentalist notion of what a good argument is, is not reconcilable with “the perspective of a participant in the normative game of giving and asking for reasons” (op.cit.: 5):

Only if one steps out of this game and looks at it [...] from above, that is not from the perspective of a participant which is always a committed one, one could say that whether an argument [...] is good [...] depends on whether it works by being de facto accepted by a specific audience (ibid).<sup>869</sup>

If one argues that what one is arguing for does not have argumentative force, one commits a performative self-contradiction – the same performative self-contradiction one commits if one argues that justification is relative to audience (which is to defend a purely instrumental notion of what a good argument is). Rorty will, however, as mentioned, reject that he argues for the assertion ‘justification is relative to audience’ in a way that makes him commit a performative self-contradiction: One might very-well say that he argues that justification is

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<sup>868</sup> Compare with Apel’s criticism of Jacques Derrida’s performative self-contradiction; “the condition of the possibility of normal communication (e.g. that of Derrida’s discourse about the *différance*) is [...] provided by the sufficient fulfillment of the contrafactually anticipated conditions of ideal communication [...]. This correction indeed implies a negation of Derrida’s dramatically deconstructivist contentions concerning the consequences of the *différance* [...],” see (Apel 2001: 9).

<sup>869</sup> As noted by Wellmer, one thus leaves the game “momentarily” when one reflects on it, or “moves to another level of it”. But were we to give a reflective description of it, “we would misrepresent it if we forgot that it is a game played between committed players who use terms like good, right, true and justified in a committed, that is in a normative sense” (2001: 5).

relative to audience, but not if ‘arguing’ refers to a context-transcending argumentative discourse where the participants implicitly assume they are able to give reasons acceptable to all possible audiences. That is, Rorty does not wish to classify his assertions either as rhetoric or as argumentation, to see them either from an instrumental perspective or from a normative perspective:

[...] the distinction between the strategic and the non-strategic use of language is just a distinction between cases in which all we care about is convincing others and cases in which we hope to learn something. [...] These cases are two ends of the spectrum [...]. Most of the time we are somewhere in the middle between these two extremes (Rorty 2000: 6).

This clarification does not solve the dilemma, however. If Rorty finds himself on one end of the spectrum, if he when he asserts that justification is relative to audience is only concerned with winning the audience (“use[ing] any dirty trick [...] [he] can [lying, *omissio veri*, *suggestion falsi*, etc.]”), he has not in fact asserted anything in a committed sense (ibid). If he finds himself at the other end of the spectrum, if he when he asserts that justification is relative to audience is a “better” description of what justification is (Rorty 1998a: 207), he must either mean that it is better for reasons all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ would accept (assume that the assertion is justified in a context-transcending sense, an assumption contradicting the content of the assertion), or for reasons only a few audiences would accept (which is not to be committed when he asserts that the description is better). And if he finds himself at a place between the two extremes, which must mean that he relates unclearly or imprecisely to the question of whether he is asserting that justification is relative to audience in a committed sense or not (he has, for example, not thought through whether he is committed or not, or he considers himself as more or less committed), he, when he comes with the assertion, could be asked by others whether he asserts it in a committed sense or not. Also then he has the choice between not asserting in a committed sense, that justification is relative to audience, or asserting it – and so commit a performative self-contradiction.

A final option is that ‘justification is relative to audience’ is not an assertion – or indeed something Rorty does not actually assert – but rather a redescription.<sup>870</sup> In “Feminism and Pragmatism” feminism is described as women’s struggle to redescribe – acquire semantic

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<sup>870</sup> See 2.3.3.

authority over – the category of woman (Rorty 1998a: 223).<sup>871</sup> The oppressed liberate themselves through redescrptions, by creating new vocabularies, redescrbing themselves; “[create] a voice never heard before” (op.cit.: 202). “In the language of the oppressor” their demands would only seem absurd (op.cit.: 203). Redescrptions “expand [logical] space” (ibid): They are the outcasts’ “flirtations with meaninglessness” (op.cit.: 225), they represent a kind of “abnormal discourse” (Fraser 1989: 100), and will only make fully sense in a new and better future where they are included in normal discourse, where they have been incorporated “in the linguistic and other practices of the common culture” (Rorty 1998a: 224). Is ‘justification is relative to audience’ a redescrption – a flirt with meaninglessness? Does it belong to a better vocabulary of the future? Is that why it does not make sense to us today? Would it be possible to justify ‘justification is relative to audience’ to future audiences that speak in new and better ways? Assuming that ‘justification is relative to audience’ is not an assertion but a redescrption in a new and better vocabulary, is, however, to make the assertion that a new vocabulary is *better*. This assertion, if it is committed, would have to be an assertion one could justify with reasons all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ would accept. One can, therefore, not assert that ‘justification is relative to audience’ belongs to a new and better vocabulary, and, thus, that the justification of ‘justification is relative to audience’ is relative to a future audience – which is to assert that justification is relative to audience – without committing a performative self-contradiction. There is, as Wellmer puts it, an internal connection between assuming that a new vocabulary is better and questions about “truth and justification”:

New vocabularies are useful if they lead to a better web of beliefs, better practical orientations, a better self-understanding; and what better (more useful) means here, cannot be spelled out without reference to truth and justification in their ordinary sense. Conversely, our truth-oriented practices (practices of justification) cannot be fully perceived, if we are not aware that ordinary questions of truth (related to the referential form of argument) may at any given point of discourse give rise to a dialectical form of argument where not only single propositions but the language and its referential network, that is the vocabulary and ways of speaking become the object of debate (2001: 17).

One cannot distinguish in any absolute way between redescrptions (“a dialectical form of argument”) and assertions made in argumentative discourse (“an inferential form of

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<sup>871</sup> Rorty describes modern feminism as a struggle for women to be able to speak as women, for a future where we are able to hear “what women as women would have to say” (1998a: 203). The women’s movement struggled – and continues to struggle – for “semantic authority” over the category of “woman” (op.cit.: 223). “Woman” should no longer be “at most, the name of a disability”, but instead “the name of a moral identity” (op.cit.: 205).



argument”). Redescriptions also implies asserting (one asserts that one’s re-description is “better”; that it is a “better social construct” for “a less painful future” (Rorty 1998a: 207, 227), where one, as far as one is committed to one’s redescription, assumes to be able to justify it in a context-transcending sense.

Rorty would perhaps reply that redescriptions should not in fact be justified, meaning made reasonable (i.e. on the basis of reasons) relative to a future audience. Redescriptions are about getting “people to *feel* indifference or satisfaction where they once recoiled. And revulsion and rage where they once *felt* indifference or resignation” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 204): They are going to change “instinctive emotional reactions” (ibid). This cannot be achieved if one is faithful to the existing community’s standards for “rational acceptability” (op.cit.: 214). But perhaps one cannot be faithful to future community standards of rationality either? Perhaps redescriptions are not to be justified, i.e. with reference to reasons, at all? Perhaps they are to be assessed exclusively as rhetoric, as an “extreme case [...] of strategic use of language” (Rorty 1998b: 21)? That ‘justification is relative to audience’ belongs to a larger and powerful prophecy that touches and moves some of us, or which may come to touch and move some of us, so that we feel different, is possible. And perhaps there is nothing more Rorty wants to accomplish by asserting that justification is relative to audience than to appeal to our emotions. If so, this is his reason for claiming that justification is relative to audience: When one uses language strategically, one has strategic reasons for using it (for example, one uses language as a tool for changing people’s feelings). However, using language strategically is not to abandon “the normative game of giving and asking for reasons” (Wellmer 2001: 5). That is: By asserting something strategically, for example in order to change people’s feelings, outside the normative game of giving and asking for reasons, is not to assert. And if Rorty is not actually asserting that justification is relative to audience, there is nothing to discuss. Asserting that justification is relative to audience in a purely strategic sense within the normative game of giving and asking for reasons is to argue that what one is arguing for has no argumentative force. If Rorty does this, he commits a performative self-contradiction – the same performative self-contradiction he commits if he non-strategically argues that ‘justification is relative to audience’ has argumentative force (which also is to argue that what he argues for does not have argumentative force). However, Rorty might consider ‘justification is relative to audience’ a genuine contribution to “sentimental education” and

“[the] progress of sentiments” (1998c: 180, 181)<sup>872</sup> – prophetic redescrptions should perhaps not be perceived as purely strategic appeals to people’s emotions. In that case, he asserts that redescrptions represent *Bildung* and *progress*, which is a variant of the assertion that they belong to a *better* vocabulary. This assertion, if it is committed, needs to be justified with reasons that all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ would accept, a condition that contradicts the content of the assertion ‘justification is relative to audience’. Rorty can, therefore, not assert that ‘justification is relative to audience’ is a legitimate contribution to sentimental education and the progress of sentiments without committing a performative self-contradiction – unless he asserts something he does not sincerely assert.

Re. c)

Given that we now have refuted Rorty’s objections in a) and b); given that we actually assume (see re. a), and in a constitutive sense must assume (see re. b), when we assert that something *is*, that it can be justified to all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’, and, in that sense, that what we assert is true. This does not necessarily mean that the assertions are true in the sense that they represent something *real*: Perhaps all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ are mistaken about what is real? Something we believe now to be true about reality may prove to be false in the future (all empirical assertions are fallible):

Other people (other audiences) may come upon new arguments, new evidences, new ways of speaking, or new theories, in the light of which our current justified beliefs might turn out to appear as questionable or false (Wellmer: 2001: 3).

And vice versa: Something we believe to be false about reality today may show itself to be true in the future. The question the objection in c) raises, is, however, how we can know whether anything we consider as true about reality at some point in time represents something real – independent of whether what we consider as true could be proven false at some other point in time or not (perhaps it would not be proven false at any point in time), independent of how many audiences think there is reason to believe that what we regard as true represents something real (also all possible audiences). How can we know that reality-for-us is reality-in-itself? As Karl-Otto Apel points out, the question should instead be how we can know that reality-for-us is reality-it-is-possible-to-have-knowledge-about. Asking how we can know whether reality-for-us is “reality of unknowable things-in-themselves” is a “nonsensical”

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<sup>872</sup> Rorty refers to Anette Baier, see Rorty (1998).

question (2001: 6): It is asking how we can have knowledge about something that we have defined as something we cannot have knowledge about. Reality-it-is-possible-to-have-knowledge-about is that which corresponds to what all possible audiences of ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ in an argumentative discourse think *is* (meaning, what they think *is real*.) This is Peirce’s central point, as Apel quotes:

[...] on the one hand, reality is independent not necessarily of thought in general, but only of what you or I or any finite number of men may think about it; and [...], on the other hand; though the object of the final opinion depends on what that opinion is, yet what that opinion is does not depend on what you or I or anybody thinks. [...] and if, after the extinction of any race, another should rise with faculties or dispositions for investigation, that true opinion must be one which they would ultimately come to (op.cit.: 5).

This idea about an ideal argumentative discourse where all possible audiences participate, and opinions are therefore ‘final’ and ‘ultimate’ – and correspond to reality-it-is-possible-to-have-knowledge-about – should be considered as a regulative idea (Apel) or as a performative idealization (Wellmer), an idea/idealization we implicitly assume (Wellmer)/contrafactually anticipate (Apel) when we assert something (and therefore cannot reject without committing a performative self-contradiction): “[it] cannot be factually reached but only approximated” (op.cit: 9).<sup>873</sup> Reality-for-us can therefore only be more or less true<sup>874</sup> (in the meaning corresponding to reality-it-is-possible-to-have-knowledge-about), in the sense that we through actual argumentative discourse, in which ‘you or I or anybody’; ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’, ‘with faculties or dispositions for investigation’ participate, approach reality-it-is-possible-to-have knowledge-about.

2)

With that we can return to the quotation from Rorty which we took as our starting point in the discussion about the relationship between asserting that something *is*, asserting that something *is true*, and asserting that something *is real*; “[...] the only intrinsic features of human beings are those they share with brutes – for example, the ability to suffer and inflict pain. Every other feature is up for grabs” (1998a: 205). One can assert that human beings *are* in a certain way (as one can assert that other things in the world *are* in a certain way), that they for example have particular abilities. If one asserts this (because one *can* assert it), one also asserts that it is true (in the sense elaborated in the previous section), and real (in the sense

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<sup>873</sup> See 2.3.3.

<sup>874</sup> Given fallibilism.

elaborated in the previous section). One may also assert that human beings have specific primary features, which should not, however, be considered as ‘intrinsic’,<sup>875</sup> but which are not ‘up for grabs’ in the same manner as their other features. Not in the sense that there can never come a day where human beings no longer have these primary features. But when human beings no longer have these primary features, and we even so continue to refer to them as human beings, that which we mean by the term ‘human being’ will be radically different from what we today mean by the term human being. To assert that human beings have an ability to relate themselves reflectively to and let their actions be motivated by reasons – to assert that human beings have a capacity for reason – is not different in principle from asserting, as Rorty does, that human beings have the ability to suffer and inflict pain. This is not to say that everyone who has the ability to suffer and inflict pain also has a capacity for reason. But to assert that human beings have an ability to suffer and inflict pain and to assert that human beings have a capacity for reason, are two cases of asserting that something *is*, and thus that it is true and real (in the sense elaborated in the previous section). If we can assert that human beings have the ability to suffer and inflict pain – something Rorty believes we can – then there is no reason in principle why we cannot assert that human beings also have a capacity for reason. Rorty assumes, also, that human beings in fact *have* a capacity for reason (which is to assume that the assertion that human beings have a capacity for reason can be justified for all participants in argumentative discourse). He believes our justifications are relative to audience; we have the ability to justify, meaning giving reasons. If human beings actually have a capacity for reason (and we can know it), then Rorty cannot justify his assertion that we cannot assert that something is morally right because we cannot know whether people have a capacity for reason: He can, of course, still assert that universal moral norms (‘the Moral Law’) cannot be justified (starting with ‘Reason’), but not that they cannot be justified because ‘Reason’ (can)not be (because we cannot know whether anything is).

Moral universalism presupposes that we *are* rational (and in that sense that something *is*). It is, however, misleading to assert that moral universalism presupposes moral realism (as if one, in order to be a moral universalist, must believe that there are moral facts). Norms are

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<sup>875</sup> The word gives essentialist associations. It is therefore surprising that Rorty uses it. He rejects explicitly essentialist approaches to what a human being is (1998a: 206), just as he rejects essentialist notions of women. Women are created and re-created through speech: “New social constructs” create “new beings” (op.cit: 226). Women are not real; i.e. they have no essential traits (he is not an essentialist realist). He also does not consider the term woman as having an essential meaning (he is not an essentialist nominalist). There are absolutely no conceptual limits of how ‘she’ can be described and re-described: It is our changing “purposes”, our “courage and imagination” that decide (op.cit: 209, 222). Rorty imagines, even, “a society in which the male-female distinction is no longer of much interest” (op.cit: 227).

regulators of interaction. One cannot deduce norms (given that there are no normative facts) from facts, from is to ought – or from the fact that human beings have an ability to justify norms, to specific norms. When we assert that a moral norm is valid, we assume, in a constitutive sense, that the norm can be justified to all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’, and in that sense, that the norm is right. That is to say: If we assert that a moral norm ought to regulate interaction, but not that it is right, we are either not committed when we make the assertion, or we commit a performative self-contradiction: The assertion that a moral norm we are committed to is not right, contradicts that which we implicitly presuppose/contrafactually anticipate as regulative idea/performative idealization when we assert it. Rorty claims in his Tanner Lecture that there is no method or procedure for evaluating moral norms “except courageous and imaginative experimentation” (1998a: 217); brave and creative re-descriptions in a better vocabulary: “Prophecy, as we [pragmatists like myself] see it, is all that non-violent political movements [like feminism] can fall back on” (op.cit: 207). The regulative idea/performative idealization about a context-transcending argumentative discourse that we implicitly assume when claiming that a moral norm is right indicates, however, a method or procedure for evaluating moral norms. Feminists have more to fall back on than prophecies. In addition, the ideal argumentative discourse has a normative basis. Also this basis cannot be denied without committing a performative self-contradiction, because to deny it, is to deny the basis of the ideal argumentative discourse we implicitly assume when denying. In argumentative discourses as regulative ideas/performative idealizations, assertions about truth and rightness are justified by all ‘sufficiently competent or enlightened persons’ – as free and equal. It is

[...] a speech situation that satisfies improbable conditions: openness to the public, inclusiveness, equal rights to participation, immunization against external and internal compulsion, as well as the participants’ orientation toward reaching understanding (Habermas 2000: 46).

This ideal situation cannot be actually reached, Habermas emphasizes; it “satisfies *improbable* conditions” (my emphasis, *ibid.*). We can, however, “imagine in the present what an approximately ideal satisfaction would look like” (*ibid.*) – and do our best to correct our practices relative to this idea. What is defined here, therefore, is not what Rorty claims, i.e. “[an] impossible task of developing a non-hegemonic discourse, one in which truth is no longer connected with power” (1998a: 210), but a normative obligation – inferred from the constitutive conditions of language use – to show each other equal respect.

Feminist demands can be linked to this normative obligation: Everyone, regardless of gender, should be treated with equal respect. If someone denies this norm, they deny the normative basis of the argumentative discourse they implicitly assume when denying. To this Rorty would object that he does not necessarily deny that all are to be treated respectfully. Endorsing this idea, is, however, not to assert a moral norm, i.e. a norm that all possible audiences would accept: Justification is relative to audience, also if what we are justifying are moral norms (as if what we are justifying are assertions about what is). To assert that justification is relative to audience in a committed sense is, however, to commit a performative self-contradiction. That is: If one in fact does not sincerely assert that justification is relative to audience, there is nothing to discuss. If one is committed when one asserts, the assertion's content contradicts the condition for asserting; that the assertion can be justified for all possible audiences.<sup>876</sup>

3)

Rorty is mistaken when he claims that feminism cannot be justified with reference to a norm of treating everyone with equal respect, independent of gender, because such a norm cannot be justified. To claim that the justification of this norm is relative to context (i.e. 'justification is relative to audience') is to commit a performative self-contradiction on two levels. One denies that which one implicitly presupposes/contrafactually anticipates as regulative idea/performative idealization when asserting – namely a context-transcending argumentative discourse. And one denies the norm of equal respect that is the basis of this discourse.

Rorty thinks feminists must touch and move their audiences to achieve their aims. They must affect them, change their feelings. He claims that the norm about everyone's equal worth does not touch us. Feminists need, indeed, powerful redescriptions in new and better languages "to change particular reactions of revulsion, horror, satisfaction, or delight" (op.cit: 204). However, the norm of everyone's equal worth, in different vocabularies, has already affected a number of audiences, and continues to do so. The fact that norms move us and touch our feelings, does, however, not necessarily mean that they are 'better'. They must also stand the test of argumentative discourse. This is the case for all assertions. Assertions, including those

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<sup>876</sup> This would also be the case if Rorty states that justification is relative to audience during strategic language use, or if 'justification is relative to audience' is to be considered a redescription in a better vocabulary (see the previous discussion). In both cases a dilemma arises: Either he does not assert that justification is relative to audience, or he does assert it, and commits a performative self-contradiction.

involved in feminist demands, can be redescribed in a better language. Such redescrptions cannot be separated from the assertion that they are better, however. “Feminism and Pragmatism” is Rorty’s attempt to introduce feminism by way of redescrptions as an *alternative* to a feminism based on moral universalism. But feminist redescrptions presuppose moral universalism; they cannot and should not be regarded as its alternative.

## **Exkurs: Richard Rorty and Nancy Fraser**

In her early works, Nancy Fraser, one of the central contributors in feminist theory debates from the 1980s and onwards, was highly influenced by Richard Rorty’s approach to philosophy. In her article in *Feminism as Critique* (1987) she defends, with reference to Rorty, a ‘social criticism without philosophy’, as an alternative to, on the one hand, Seyla Benhabib’s defense of feminist critique as a morally based critique, on the other, Judith Butler’s notion of critique as deconstruction. According to the early Fraser, criticism does not need a moral justification. Critical theory’s only standard, the hallmark of critical theory compared to other theories, is, in her view, its political relevance.

She advances her views in the collection *Unruly Practices. Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, published two years later. In her article “Solidarity or Singularity? Richard Rorty between Romanticism and Technocracy”, Fraser criticizes Rorty’s political program and social-theoretical assumptions. She subscribes to his philosophical assumptions, however. Referring to Rorty’s *Consequences of Pragmatism*, she defends a “zero-degree pragmatism” which criticizes “traditional philosophical concepts like truth and reason, human nature and morality” (Fraser 1989: 106). In “Feminism and Pragmatism” Rorty, accordingly, sums up his discussion with Fraser in the following way: “I suspect my differences with Fraser are concrete and political rather than abstract and philosophical” (Rorty 1998a: 209).

Obviously, the early Fraser’s philosophical commitments make her critical of Habermas’ notion of justification. In another article in *Unruly Practices*, “Foucault. A Young Conservative?”, her main target is indeed Michel Foucault and his critique of humanism. She criticizes, however, also Habermas and his defense of general humanist standards with a moral status:

[...] it may turn out that there will be grounds for rejecting, or at least for modifying and resituating, the ideal of autonomy. If feminists succeed in reinterpreting our history so as to link that ideal to the subordination of women, then Habermas's own normative paradigm will not survive unscathed. The broader question about the normative viability of humanism is still open (1989: 53).

Fraser's clearest and most detailed rejection of giving social critique as moral basis is expressed in yet another article, however; in "What's Critical about Critical Theory? The Case of Habermas and Gender". "To my mind", she says,

[...] no one has yet improved on Marx's 1843 definition of critical theory as 'the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age'. What is so appealing about this definition is its straightforwardly political character. It makes no claim to any special epistemological status but, rather, supposes that with respect to justification there is no philosophically interesting difference between a critical theory and an uncritical one. However, there is, according to this definition, an important political difference. A critical social theory frames its research program and its conceptual framework with an eye to the aims and activities of those oppositional social movements with which it has a partisan, though not uncritical, identification. The question it asks and the models it designs are informed by that identification and interest (1989: 113).

The critical theorist should, according to Fraser, conceptualize the demands and criticisms raised by oppositional social movements, movements with which she should identify, although not uncritically. This implies that the critical theorist, for example, can work on how social movements might most efficiently reach their aims. She can raise immanent critique; point at, for example, conflicts between the different aims on the social movements' agenda. She can, moreover, analyze the social movements' demands and criticisms as expressions of real contradictions in culture and society. And she can, finally, identify and develop the social movements' critique of social pathologies.<sup>877</sup> The critical theory's agenda overlaps thus with the political agenda of social movements: Critical theory is critical when it is politically relevant (i.e. relevant relative to the political agenda of oppositional social movements), was the early Fraser's position. To what extent demands and criticisms could be justified in moral discourse, she considered irrelevant – at the time.

Recently, Fraser seems to have changed her position. In *Recognition or Redistribution?* (2003) she presents her critical theory as a theory of justification with a moral basis.<sup>878</sup> The

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<sup>877</sup> See also my discussion of different kinds of social critique in Holst (forthcoming a).

<sup>878</sup> I quote from Fraser (2002).



norm of “parity of participation”<sup>879</sup> should be considered as a universally binding justice norm; “like principles of Kantian *Moralität*, they [the justice norms] hold independently of actors’ commitments to specific values” (2002: 22). Participatory parity, and the social redistribution and cultural recognition that is necessary for insuring everyone participatory parity, are demands from the perspective of justice. They are not tied to particular ideas of self-realization and goodness: In contrast to “[the] canons of Hegelian *Sittlichkeit*” their legitimacy is not linked to a “culturally and historically specific horizons of value, which cannot be universalized” (ibid.). Fraser’s critical theory is “deontological and non-sectarian”:

Embracing the spirit of ‘subjective freedom’ that is the hallmark of modernity, it [Fraser’s critical theory] assumes that it is up to individuals and groups to define for themselves what counts as a good life and to devise for themselves an approach to pursuing it, within limits that ensure a like liberty for others. Thus [...] [it] does not appeal to a conception of self-realization or the good. It appeals, rather, to a conception of justice that can—and should—be accepted by those with divergent conceptions of the good. What makes misrecognition [and mal-distribution] morally wrong, in this view, is that it denies some individuals and groups the possibility of participating on par with others in social interaction (op.cit.: 25).

This moral justification of critical theory, the establishment of justice instead of self-realization, the right instead of the good, as standard of social critique, is what most fundamentally separates Fraser’s approach in *Recognition or Redistribution?* from that of Axel Honneth.<sup>880</sup> Fraser believes Honneth fails to give his critique of social pathologies an adequate justification. As an alternative to his attempt to ground his critique in what he refers to as ‘a formal ethic of the good’, she argues that critique, also feminist critique, must be rooted in a general deontological humanism where justice is standard. Her philosophical position is not explicated beyond general references to Rawls’ and Habermas’ theories of justice. This is, however, in itself significant. The early Fraser rejected Habermas’ notion of justification, and sided, in this question, with his opponents – be it Rorty or the Marxists.

If Fraser now understands feminist critique as a morally based critique, this is in fact a significant event in feminist theory. Her previous notion of feminism as simply ‘political’ was articulated explicitly as an intermediary position between feminism as a morally based critique on the one hand, and postmodern deconstructive feminism on the other. With *Recognition and Redistribution?* Fraser approaches Seyla Benhabib, Onora O’Neill, Martha

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<sup>879</sup> See also Chapter 8.

<sup>880</sup> *Recognition or Redistribution?* is written as a political-philosophical exchange between Fraser and Honneth.

Nussbaum and other feminist theorists who, in different ways, have long defended a feminism based on moral universalism.

## CHAPTER 8

### THE PRINCIPLE OF GENDER BALANCE

#### 8.0 Feminist equality – perfect equality?

*Menn imellom. Mannsdominans og likestillingspolitikk*<sup>881</sup> (2003) by Hege Skjeie and Mari Teigen sums up the study of gender, power and democracy made as part of the research project Power and Democracy (1998-2003), ordered and funded by the Norwegian parliament (Stortinget). In *Menn imellom* Skjeie and Teigen introduce *the principle of gender balance*; "literal equality or perfect equality, 50/50" between women and man as a central aim in feminist politics (2003: 28).

In her article "Kjønnsfrihet" ("Gender freedom"), published later, in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 1/2004, Mari Teigen attempts to clarify and justify this principle.<sup>882</sup> I have ten comments to her attempt.<sup>883</sup>

#### 8.1 Freedom and balance

Teigen says in her article that the aim of perfect balance between women and men does not conflict with individual freedom. I cannot see that she demonstrates it, however. Obviously, citizens in a society can make use of their personal autonomy in ways that do not result in 50/50 distributions between women and men on a group level. In such cases, should measures be taken, or should measures not be taken, to prevent uneven group level distributions? And which measures should be taken? Should measures that come in conflict with personal

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<sup>881</sup> *Among Men. Male Power and Politics of Gender Equality*. This chapter is an edited version of the article "Det kjønnsbalanserte samfunn" ("The gender balanced society"), published in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 2/2004. I wish to thank Fredrik W. Thue, Eirinn Larsen, Rune Slagstad, Øyvind Østerud and Anders Molander for discussions.

<sup>882</sup> The article is framed as a reply to my review of *Menn imellom*, published in *Nytt Norsk Tidsskrift* 3/2003.

<sup>883</sup> The research project on Power and Democracy (1998-2003) was led by a group of five professors, Øyvind Østerud, Per Selle, Fredrik Engelstad, Siri Meyer and Hege Skjeie. Meyer and Skjeie decided not to sign the final report of the project, because they disagreed with several of its conclusions. Instead, each of them wrote a separate concluding report (see also my brief comment on this in Chapter 4). Skjeie's report was primarily based on *Menn imellom*. In this chapter I do not discuss Skjeie's concluding report or *Menn imellom* generally, but concentrate on the principle of gender balance she (and Teigen) introduce.

autonomy be accepted, in the name of gender balance? Or are such measures unacceptable? Teigen should, in other words, order her principles.<sup>884</sup>

## 8.2 Individual and group

Teigen argues that the basic normative unit is *the group*: Justice is “equality of outcome” in the sense of “distributional equality on group level” (Teigen 2004: 87). I take the basic unit to be *the individual*. Justice is what we owe to each other as persons. Our principles of justice should express the respect and recognition that our status as persons accord us. Balanced distributions of “power, influence and resources between women and men” may hide large inequalities in the distribution of power, influence and resources within the two gender groups (op.cit.: 86). A 50/50 distribution between women and men says nothing about the individual woman’s living conditions. Gender balance defined as equality of outcome at the (gender)group level, does not guarantee *all* women’s dignity. The principle of balance is therefore inadequate as a feminist principle of justice. This is not because freedom does not presuppose equality in a number of respects. Feminism should be egalitarian: That guaranteeing “equal rights is a question of guaranteeing equality”, is obvious (op.cit.: 87). However, the principle of gender balance is not egalitarian. On the contrary it allows for huge inequalities as long as the group distributions are balanced.

## 8.3 Balance of equality in what?

It is unclear *what* should be balanced. The principle of balance is presented as a principle of gender balance in elite positions, in the distribution of power, influence and resources, *and* as a principle prescribing gender balance in societal participation as such (op.cit.: 93).<sup>885</sup> The principle in its broadest meaning and in its narrowest meaning suggests highly different normative prescriptions.

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<sup>884</sup> See for example John Rawls’ notion of “lexical order” in *A Theory of Justice*: “This is an order that requires us to satisfy the first principle in the ordering before we can move on to the second, the second before we can consider the third and so on. A principle does not come into play until those previous to it are either fully met or do not apply. [...] those earlier in the ordering have an absolute weight, so to speak, with respect to later ones, and hold without exception” (1999: 38). Rawls orders his principles lexically. His first principle of justice: “Each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all” takes precedence over the second one: “Social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both: (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity” (op.cit.: 266).

<sup>885</sup> It is, in short, unclear whether the principle of balance concerns positions (2b in Rawls), social and economic goods (2a), or societal participation in the broad sense which is Nancy Fraser’s (2003) point of departure (“parity of participation”).

## 8.4 Choices and circumstances

It is claimed that the presence of “gender-segregated patterns” makes the idea of “real preferences” behind “gender-typical” choices “illusory” (op.cit.: 90). Preferences may be described as ‘false’ to the extent that they are determined by circumstances over which we have no control. In that case, the focus should be on *under what circumstances* our choices are made, not on *what we choose*, whether we, for example, choose gender-typical or gender-untypical. Unbalanced gender distributions can be a result of ‘false’ preferences or ‘real’ preferences. Imbalance on group level does not necessarily indicate lack of freedom at the individual level, regardless of the circumstances, nor are the untypical choices that are made necessarily more free than the typical ones.

Being aware of this imbalance – knowledge of what is typical and untypical to do in the group to which one belongs – can certainly be one of the circumstances under which one makes choices. Different cultural and psychological mechanisms often make many do what the majority does – the preferences are adapted to typical preferences. Awareness of what women typically do, can in this way contribute to that more women make typical choices. Mechanisms of this kind make it more complicated to speak of ‘real preferences’ behind gender-typical choices—but not ‘illusory’.

To label one’s fellow citizens’ preferences as ‘false’ is drastic. It is to say that their wishes and priorities should not be taken seriously. It is to deny them what democratic governance presupposes that citizens accord each other – autonomy and responsibility. This is a reason to approach the topic with some caution.<sup>886</sup>

## 8.5 Nancy Fraser on *parité*

Teigen attempts to ally with the political philosopher Nancy Fraser. This alliance seems to be based on a misunderstanding. The principle of balance is inspired by the French *parité*-concept.<sup>887</sup> *Parité* refers to, Fraser writes:

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<sup>886</sup> For discussions on so-called adaptive preferences, see for example Martha Nussbaum (1999, 2000: 135-147) and Anne Phillips (2001).

<sup>887</sup> For an explication of the link between the principle of balance and the concept of *parité*, see for example Teigen (2000: 70-71, 74-75).

[...] a law mandating that women occupy half of all the slots on electoral lists in campaign for seats in legislative assemblies. [...] it means [accordingly] strict numerical equality in gender representation in electoral contests. For me, in contrast, parity is not a matter of numbers. Rather, it is a qualitative condition, the condition of being a *peer*, of being on *par* with others, of interacting with them on an equal footing. That condition is not guaranteed by mere numbers [...]. To be sure, the severe underrepresentation of women in legislative assemblies and other formal political institutions usually signifies qualitative disparities of participation in social life. But numerical quotas are not necessarily or always the best solution. Thus, my conception deliberately leaves open (for democratic deliberation) the question exactly what degree of representation or level of equality is necessary to ensure participatory parity (original emphasis, 2003: 238).<sup>888</sup>

Concerning regulating other areas of society according to the principle of balance, Fraser notes:

[...] justice requires parity of participation in a multiplicity of interaction arenas, including labor markets, sexual relations, family life, public spheres, and voluntary associations in civil society. In each arena, however, participation means something different. [...] No single formula, quantitative or otherwise, can suffice for every case. What precisely is required to achieve participatory parity depends in part on the nature of the social interaction in question (op.cit.: 239).

Hence, Fraser explicitly distances herself from the principle of balance as a standard of justice. She does not reject affirmative action policies, but, generally speaking, she prefers what she refers to as *transformative* strategies – strategies that correct the generative mechanisms producing injustice – rather than *affirmative* compensating strategies (Fraser 2003: 175-212).

## 8.6 Justification of balance

Feminists should have “an ambition to redistribute” (Teigen 2004: 93). The question is what should be redistributed,<sup>889</sup> but also which distributions should be the outcome of redistribution. The justification of the principle of gender balance is unclear. Why redistribute so the outcome is perfect 50/50 distributions? The authors of *Menn imellom* refer to the fact that “women make up half of the population” (Skjeie and Teigen 2003: 27). However, just simply because a group – for example people with blue eyes – makes up a percentage share of the population of a society, does not grant it a proportional percentage share of its goods.

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<sup>888</sup> To my mind, the article I refer to here is published only in Swedish and French.

<sup>889</sup> This is dealt with in my third comment.

What distinguish gender groups from other groups? Teigen suggests an answer. She claims that women have “shared interests” in a “minimalistic sense” (Teigen 2004: 91).<sup>890</sup> This shared interest is not based on women having shared subjective “experiences or views” (Skjeie and Teigen 2003: 28). It is also not based on women’s objective position in a universal gender power system, as in traditional theories of patriarchy (Teigen 2004: 91). Ultimately, there is no mention of what the shared interest is based on. Moreover, why one group’s minimalistic shared interests should entitle the group to a share of the goods that corresponds to the group’s percentage of the population, moreover, remains unelaborated .

## 8.7 Gender and other differences

If women, because they have minimalistic shared interests, have a right to 50% of the goods of society, notwithstanding how these goods are defined, also other groups with minimalistic shared interests – such as social classes and ethnic groups – should have a right to goods equivalent to their percentage of the population. As Fraser says, justice requires:

[...] participatory parity across *all major axes of social differentiation*, hence not only gender [...]. [...] this entails that proposed reforms be evaluated from multiple perspectives – hence that proponents must consider whether measures aimed at redressing one sort of disparity are likely to end up exacerbating another (my emphasis, 2003: 239)

Teigen does not discuss such issues.<sup>891</sup>

## 8.8 Is and ought

Is-questions and ought-questions should be kept relatively separate.<sup>892</sup> As Teigen points out, the basis of Ronald Dworkin’s arguments is “*ethical individualism*” (my emphasis, 2004: 89). This is, obviously, not because he “outright” rejects “group affiliation as [...] social *reality*” (my emphasis, op.cit.: 88). One does not need to deny elementary descriptions of social life in

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<sup>890</sup> It is therefore surprising that Teigen denies something that ought to be less controversial; that women in the Norwegian elite may have a shared interest in certain affirmative action measures. There is, for example, reason to believe that many of the women who would be considered for elite position where affirmative action is implemented, are women who already belong to the elite.

<sup>891</sup> Of course, women do not have a “particular responsibility” for discussing these issues (Teigen 2004: 92). Women are citizens with a *similar* responsibility to struggle against injustice, gender injustice and other kinds of injustice, as other citizens.

<sup>892</sup> See Chapters 2 and 9.

order to believe that the individual ought to be the basic normative unit. One can acknowledge the existence of groups without accepting that justice is to be understood as the equality of outcome between groups.<sup>893</sup> One cannot, in short, *infer* from is to ought.

## 8.9 Principles and policies

The connections between general principles of justice and concrete policies are not simple. One can, for example, commit oneself to a general principle of gender balance, and still reject affirmative action policies. One may give other principles precedence and for that reason reject affirmative action. One may give the principle of balance precedence, but believe that the affirmative action policies will not effectively contribute to balance, at least not on all arenas. And one may reject the principle of balance from a normative point of view, and favor certain variants of affirmative action policies anyway, like Fraser.

The complex connections between principles and the application of principles, morality and politics, occur because principles are to be applied in *different situations*: Principles require different things in different situations. Another complicating factor is that principles may be *interpreted differently*. In a democracy questions linked to the interpretation and application of principles are the concerns of citizens. Citizens may delegate such questions to the judicial system and professional expertise. However, judicial discretion and expert's assessments are not above democratic opinion and will formation.

## 8.10 The limits of state power

The basis of feminist policies should be a “principle of freedom”, according to Teigen (2004: 93). She believes that this principle of freedom “is about the right to make gender-untypical choices, about the right to live and choose in other ways than what gender conformism dictates” (ibid.). I believe the responsibility of the state should be to guarantee the individual citizen her right to ‘live’ and ‘choose’ as autonomous person. Protecting certain gender-untypical lives and choices may require particular *political measures*. However, the state should not as *a matter of principle* value gender-untypical lives and choices above the gender-

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<sup>893</sup> To reject justice as equality of outcome between groups is not to commit a “fallacy” (Teigen 2004: 90). It is to reject a mistaken conception of justice.



typical ones. First, because the value of one particular lifestyle is not relative to the average lifestyle of the group to which one belongs. A lifestyle does not become more valuable because it is untypical rather than typical. Second, because the state, generally speaking, should be careful with rating some notions of the good life above others,<sup>894</sup> for example, a gender-untypical notion above the gender-typical.

Teigen stresses that gender-typical choices should not be prevented by the use of “punishment” and “coercion” (op.cit.: 90). It is unclear what she means by punishment and coercion in this context. The state has a number of measures at its disposal; some are more ‘coercive’, require more use of force, than others. The use of state power is, however, *always* linked to coercion in the sense that states possess monopoly over the legitimate use of coercive power. There is thus connected a fundamental ambivalence to using the medium of state power. The state can promote justice and values so effectively among other things *because of* its monopoly over the use of coercive power. The limitations of state feminism are linked to the ambiguity of the medium of state power.<sup>895</sup> As emphasized by Fraser, state intervention may be necessary in a number of contexts. It cannot, however, replace “the use of nongovernmental counterpowers like social movements and democratic political associations” (1989: 110).<sup>896</sup>

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<sup>894</sup> As stressed by Simone de Beauvoir: “The possibilities of the individual” should *not* “be defined” with “notions tied to happiness, but with notions tied to freedom” (Teigen 2004: 93).

<sup>895</sup> See Chapter 6.

<sup>896</sup> “This is the view of many feminists”, she adds. In Scandinavia there has been little debate among feminists on the problems associated with the ambiguity of the medium of state power.

## CHAPTER 9

# THE RIGHT TO PRIVACY: A FEMINIST RE-INTERPRETATION

### 9.0 Privacy – for feminists?

Every woman should have a right to a private domain; a room of her own, Virginia Woolf wrote in *A Room of One's Own*. Woolf attempted to link the struggle for women's liberation to the individual's right to privacy. What conception of privacy is compatible with feminism? What should the right to privacy protect?

Feminists have rightly criticized a number of conventional conceptions of privacy. Their critique is succinctly expressed in the slogan 'the personal is political'. This slogan unites most traditions of feminist thought, and challenges Western philosophy's division between a private, non-political sphere and a public, political sphere, a division adopted from ancient Greek philosophy, but most often associated with the liberal contract tradition.<sup>897</sup> To discuss private issues as public and political, presupposes new and less exclusive conceptions of the public sphere. Feminists have contributed considerably to the critique of the public sphere during the past decades.<sup>898</sup>

What feminists think of privacy, is a much more open issue. Discussions on the topic have been limited and sporadic.<sup>899</sup> Nonetheless, feminist claims are difficult to articulate without assuming the value of privacy in one way or another. The question is in what way: How does one conceptualize people's right to a room of their own without covering up and justifying violations against women, as conventional conceptions of privacy have done so often? How may the struggle for the right to privacy become a significant feminist struggle, in the spirit of

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<sup>897</sup> See for example John Locke's *Two Treatises of Government* (1689/1690). For a more recent explication, see John Rawls (1993: 137): "The political is distinct from the associational, which is voluntary in ways that the political is not; it is also distinct from the personal and the familial, which are affectional, again in ways that the political is not."

<sup>898</sup> For overviews, see Benhabib (1996) and Landes (1998).

<sup>899</sup> Significant contributions are Allen (1988), Rössler (2001), and Cohen (2002). In Norway among others Nina C. Raaum (1995) and Tordis Borchgrevink (1995) have written on this topic (see Chapter 5). See also 5.4.10.

Virginia Woolf? I will attempt to specify a normative conception of privacy which is not only compatible with feminism, but which, in my opinion, will also enrich it.<sup>900</sup>

## **9.1 Feminist critique of the private-public divide: Empirical and moral**

The feminist critique of the private-public divide has been of an empirical and of a moral nature. Feminists have claimed on the one hand, that one must include practices, cultural patterns and social relations which are internal to the private sphere, or cross conventional demarcations between the private and the public, in order to describe gender relations adequately.

On the other hand, feminist critique of the private-public divide is a moral critique and a contribution to the discussion on how society should be organized. Struggles for a just society need to take justified feminist concerns into consideration: They must include struggles against gender injustices. Such injustices manifest themselves, however, not only through relations in the public sphere, but through relations that are internal to the private sphere, or cross the established private-public divide. Thus, what are often referred to as private and non-political should be turned into public, political matters, also for moral reasons, feminists have argued. Their objection to rigid boundaries between private and public, have been directed especially, if not exclusively, against liberal political philosophy.<sup>901</sup> The division also has pre-modern philosophical roots, however. Moreover, it is, for example, built into, Marxism and its distinction between reproduction and production, and in neo-Aristotelian communitarianism (Okin 1989).<sup>902</sup> It also appears, often as silently assumed, in postmodern works (Boling 2000).

In this chapter I discuss primarily the morally based feminist critique of the private-public divide. I shall attempt to work out a normative conception of privacy that is consistent with this critique. Feminism appear to presuppose such a concept: Few feminists dismiss Virginia

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<sup>900</sup> This chapter is an edited version of Holst (2002). I wish to thank Hege Skjeie, Hilde Danielsen, Christine M. Jacobsen, Randi E. Gressgård, Kjersti Fjørtoft, Turid Markussen, Gunnar Skirbekk, Anders Molander, Fredrik W. Thue, Bente Nicolaysen and Lars Blichner for comments.

<sup>901</sup> Some feminists reject a partnership between feminism and liberalism (Pateman 1988). Others, such as myself, find valuable resources for feminist analysis in the liberal tradition (see also Okin 1989, 2002, Cornell 1995, 1998, Fraser 1999, Nussbaum 1999, 2004, Phillips 2001).

<sup>902</sup> Okin analyzes Alasdair MacIntyre's (1984) proposal of a neo-Aristotelian ethic of virtue.

Woolf's moral intuition and the value of privacy altogether, even though some do, among feminist communitarians (Glendon 1987, 1991). More feminists, however, deconstruct existing conceptions of privacy, without specifying alternative conceptions, or discussing why privacy is worth defending. Typically, feminists argue convincingly that the right to privacy, as it has been conventionally defined, has contributed to oppressing women (Pateman 1988, MacKinnon 1989). At the same time, human life without any privacy – in “total institutions” (Goffmann 1988), in totalitarian regimes<sup>903</sup> – is morally outrageous: It is inhuman to deny someone a room of her own. The question is how these two positions, which both seem reasonable, can be defended simultaneously.

## 9.2 Feminism, politics and the public sphere

The lack of discussion of privacy among feminists stands in contrast to the rich feminist discussions on how public space may be democratized. The feminist critique of the public sphere has a set of common features. It has focused on:

1) The conditions necessary for guaranteeing everyone a real possibility of participating on a free and equal basis in the public sphere, in political discussions about issues that concern them.<sup>904</sup>

2) The need to include more topics, discourses and vocabularies in public, political discussions. Feminists have argued against excluding certain topics from political discussions: “Only participants themselves can decide what is and what is not of common concern to them” (Fraser 1992: 129). They have argued against tendencies of reducing public discourse to moral, legal and pragmatic discourse, and of marginalizing ethical discourse on the good life (Benhabib 1992, Mouffe 1992), and for including more properly aesthetic-expressive vocabularies in public, political debate (Young 1997, McAfee 2000).

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<sup>903</sup> See Hannah Arendt (1973). George Orwell (1949) describes totalitarianism in his famous novel *1984*.

<sup>904</sup> Judith Butler (1992) claim that the idea of universal, egalitarian inclusion is self-contradictory, because classifying is excluding; to limit something from something else. However, as Jodi Dean (1996) points out, excluding something, because complete representation of meaning is impossible, must be distinguished from excluding someone from political discussions.

3) Ways to politicize the private-public divide. The boundaries of the public sphere should not be considered as absolute; they are negotiated and re-negotiated, institutionalized and re-institutionalized after political discussions and social struggles.<sup>905</sup>

4) The public sphere is not homogeneous. There is not, nor should there be, only one public, but different publics. Some publics are “strong”, the publics where binding decisions are made according to formal procedures. Other, “weaker” publics of democratic opinion and will formation are less formalized. Ideally, social movements and discussions of weak publics inspire and influence decisions and procedures of strong publics (Fraser 1992).

5) Ways to construct conceptions of the public sphere and politics that do not disregard significant differences between groups and individuals, or the complexities of and shifts in individuals’ identities; “differences within women” (Lauretis 1987: 2).

### **9.3 The right to privacy as a precondition for critique of the public sphere**

In most feminist discussions of the public sphere, the notion of privacy ends up being an insufficiently developed residual category (Cohen 1992, 2001). Much is written about when and how private concerns should be politicized, less is written about when what is private should remain private. This has caused some critics to describe feminism as a project advancing a tyranny of intimacy that is incompatible with any notion of privacy. No concerns are to be considered private, our lives are made into a public concern, without restrictions.<sup>906</sup> To become a public concern is to be made more vulnerable to informal pressures of conforming to public opinion, and to the formal political decision-making power of the majority. If we, as entire persons, if our bodies and souls unmodified, are made into public concerns, then all aspects of our person could, potentially, be made into topics of collective

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<sup>905</sup> The private-public divide is a social construction, but also the outcome of normative considerations: “The claims of social construction are important, but cannot be pressed too far. That privacy is socially constructed does not mean that it should not be subject to normative critique and evaluation, nor does it mean that privacy is immune to legal and political influence” (Schauer 2001: 228).

<sup>906</sup> Dean criticizes the publicity-hounding which “Habermachosistic” conceptions of the public encourages: Everything is considered potentially to be of public interest (1999: 162). Moon introduces a liberal critique of discourse ethics’ theory of the public sphere, as this theory has been developed by among others Habermas, Benhabib and Fraser. According to Moon, a clear boundary should be drawn between issues that belong in the political discussions of the public sphere, and the issues that belong in the private, non-political sphere (discussed in Habermas 1999: 309-310).

discussion and majority rule. Without the right to privacy being recognized as a fundamental right, the way is cleared for the tyranny of the majority; for the political majority freely dictating the most private details of our lives (Rawls 1996, Alexy 1994).

A reasonable interpretation of the feminist critique of the public sphere may, however, be combined with a defense of personal autonomy.<sup>907</sup> The feminist critique of the public sphere presupposes, in fact, a right to privacy. The right to privacy allows us to pull back from public political discussions to make sovereign decisions on our own behalf. This possibility to retreat, the possibility of personal autonomy, is a precondition for public or political autonomy; for our participation as free and equal in different publics, in different discourses, about different political issues, and about the limits to politics. Why a precondition? First, because individuals' participation in public discussions cannot be referred to as free, if individuals are not guaranteed the right to retreat from participation. The right to privacy understood as a negative right to pull back, is constitutive for communicative freedom in the public space:

The decision to communicate must be free. It is constitutive for the freedom of the speaker to raise a validity claim as well as for the hearer's freedom to take a positive or negative position. Any coercion would violate the sincerity condition of the illocutionary success of a speech act. Thus, 'communicative freedom' always presupposes 'negative liberty' or a right to privacy on a very fundamental level (Günther 1996: 1040).

Second, it is difficult to elaborate the normative significance of including *everyone* in collective political opinion-and will formation, without presupposing the importance of protecting the private sphere of individual opinion- and will formation. Feminist conceptions of the public sphere are made so radically inclusive, because it is assumed that each voice makes a difference. The interconnection between collective-democratic and individual opinion- and will formation is, for example, evident in recent feminist contributions inspired by poststructuralism, which have focused on the need to develop conceptions about the public sphere that are more sensitive to differences (Mouffe 1992, Honnig 1998). But if there should be any point in making the public more sensitive to differences, there must be differences to which the public may be sensitive. Significant differences between and within each of us will,

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<sup>907</sup> Unreasonable interpretations, interpretations coming to the opposite conclusion, may be due to the fact that radical, populist and communitarian traditions within feminism have outlined their critique of the public sphere unreasonably. Unreasonable interpretations may also be due to unreasonable readings of feminist critique of the private-public divide.

quite simply, ultimately cease to exist, if the individual is not guaranteed physical and psychosexual integrity and existential autonomy. Everyone should have the right to a room of her own, “a transitional space”, where they can construct complex and distinct individual identities (Morris 2000). As Jean L. Cohen points out: “[...] the right to privacy, provide[s] the protection of levels of difference that no combination of democratic publics can directly accommodate” (1996: 191).

It seems, thus, possible to infer at least rudiments of a right to privacy from the feminist critique of the public sphere. The right to privacy can, however, also be given a freestanding justification based on the moral norm of equal respect.<sup>908</sup>

## **9.4 The moral right to privacy**

How should our moral right to privacy be elaborated? What, more specifically, are included in the privacy we owe each other? We fail to treat each other with equal respect, if we do not recognize each other's:

1) right to a negatively defined domain where we can freely act and express ourselves. Everyone has the right to be protected from having this domain limited by others, unless the limitations can be justified with reference to the norm of equal respect.

This basic right to negative liberty presupposes:

2) a right to physical and psychosexual integrity. Everyone has the right to be protected from physical and psychosexual violations.

The basic right to negative liberty implies, moreover:

3) a right to negative communicative freedom. Everyone has the right to participate in public discussions. Everyone is, however, also free not to participate.

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<sup>908</sup> This is what moral philosophers refer to as an autonomy-based justification of the right to privacy, in contrast to consequentialist or conventionalist justifications (Frey 2000, Weinreb 2000). There have been various attempts to outline a justification of privacy based on the norm of equal respect (see for example Rawls 1996, 1999, Dworkin 1978, Wellmer 1991, Benhabib 1992, Habermas 1993, O'Neill 2000). I will not discuss the different attempts here. For a justification of the norm of equal respect, see Chapter 2.

The basic right to negative liberty presupposes, furthermore, that we are guaranteed certain positive liberties: There are normative interrelations between negative and positive liberties.<sup>909</sup> We have

4) a right to existential autonomy. Everyone is free to make “strong evaluations” about self-realization and way of life, and, thus, to create oneself as unique person with a distinct and complex personal identity (Taylor 1995). When we carry out these evaluations, we can, and, of course, we often do, seek the advice of others.<sup>910</sup> And, from an ethical point of view, it could be argued that we should make strong evaluations that are sensitive to the strong evaluations of others, for example those who are close to us, family, friends and lovers; those we care for. It is, moreover, reasonable to adjust our expectations to what we can reasonably expect to achieve, and rational, from a pragmatic point of view, to choose the means that will, most effectively, make us achieve our goals.<sup>911</sup> A right to existential autonomy implies, nevertheless, that we have, ultimately, a right to act exclusively on the basis of our own strong evaluations,<sup>912</sup> in ways that go against public opinion and the points of view of family, friends and lovers, in ways that contradict instrumental rationality claims, and reasonable assessment of what we can reasonably expect to achieve, if this is what we decide to do (Wellmer 1993: 39, fill in quote).

Furthermore, we have

5) a right to make weak evaluations. We have a right to autonomy, not only when we make deep decisions about way of life; when we advance and act upon “higher preferences” (Habermas 1999: 205), but also when making the many minor choices of everyday life.

A right to privacy needs, moreover, a real basis; we need to have real possibilities to make use of it:

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<sup>909</sup> Negative liberty is freedom from something. Positive liberty is freedom to something. As Alexy (1994) points out, the claims of negative and positive liberties are also conceptually interrelated: One claims freedom from something to something – for example, the freedom *from* certain restrictions – *to* practice existential autonomy. See also Chapter 6.

<sup>910</sup> Intrasubjective dialogue has as its precondition the intersubjective communication of the lifeworld (see Chapter 2). However, in George Herbert Mead’s terminology: The ‘I’ has, ultimately, the right to veto the ‘me’ (Dean 1996, Forst 1999).

<sup>911</sup> See 2.4.4 and 2.4.5.

<sup>912</sup> If our actions are compatible with the norm of equal respect.



6) Cognitive, linguistic and psycho-sexual “conditions of individuation” should be guaranteed (Cornell 1995: 3-27, 1998).<sup>913</sup> If such conditions are unfulfilled, the individual will develop neither basic communicative and moral skills, nor the self-confidence and self-respect necessary for exercising individual autonomy.

7) The right to privacy should be made into a legal right, a *Grundrecht* that is unconditional and cannot be put aside, not even by the political majority.

8) The limits of the right to privacy should be drawn in political processes of democratic deliberation. Everyone has the right to be protected from having her negatively defined domain of freedom limited by others, unless the limitations can be justified with reference to the norm of equal respect. The justification of the limitations should be made in public discussions where all concerned are included as free and equal, and have “a right to a moral veto right” (Forst 1996: 218): We have a right to veto others’ use of their privacy right in ways that disrespects our own right to privacy.

9) All should be guaranteed basic social rights without which they cannot act and express themselves freely as private persons.<sup>914</sup>

## 9.5 Conventional conceptions of privacy: A critique

This conception of privacy differs from a number of other conceptions of privacy. First, this conception is not privacy considered as a natural right to negative liberty, such as the classic liberal “right to be let alone” or “the right to non-interference” (Frey 2000; Schauer 2001).<sup>915</sup> The privacy defended here, regards negative and positive liberties as interconnected,<sup>916</sup> the

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<sup>913</sup> Cornell argues that these conditions may be understood in terms of “primary goods” (Rawls 1999), or as basic “capabilities” (Sen 1993).

<sup>914</sup> Consider, for example, the list in Nussbaum (1999). Social rights require subtler consideration of responsibilities than do freedom rights. Universal freedom rights correspond to universal responsibilities: “A right not to be raped [...] will be marred if it is a right against some but not against all others. If it were some others who have no obligation to refrain from raping [...] then nobody would have an unrestricted right” (O’Neill 2000: 101). The rights to goods and services are of a different kind. These rights “can[not] be fully met if *somebody* – or *some body* – [does not] provide [...]”. It is not necessary that everyone contribute to provision, and wholly counter-productive, not to say impossible, if everybody attempts to be the provider on all occasions” (original emphasis, op.cit.: 101, 103).

<sup>915</sup> The norm of equal respect is not natural or pre-social. It is a norm human beings as language-users presuppose in social interaction.

<sup>916</sup> Both conceptually and normatively.

limits of privacy as the concern of citizens under the rule of law,<sup>917</sup> it prescribes social redistribution and public education. It should, thus, not be confused with the libertarian right to private property and contract freedom.<sup>918</sup> This right to privacy is not an unconditional right to own the product of one's own labor and keep the surplus of freely established contracts of exchange (Nozick 1974).<sup>919</sup> Second, this conception of privacy is not established on the basis of conventional standards of decency: What is private is not defined as that which is indecent to expose and deal with publicly, because conflicting with hegemonic ideas of what is valuable and virtuous in a community (MacIntyre 1984).

Third, this conception of privacy differs from patriarchal conceptions of privacy that considers personal privacy as equivalent to the privacy of the family. Patriarchal conceptions of privacy are introduced and re-introduced despite feminist criticism, by communitarians, but also by liberals.<sup>920</sup> A feminist defense of privacy is based on moral individualism; it defends the autonomy and integrity of the individual vis-à-vis others, also vis-à-vis other members of her family. The right to privacy is individual. It does not protect certain groups or institution from political intervention, if this is required for moral reasons (Rössler 2001: 49-55). That the right is an individual right does not imply, however, that it presupposes a notion of individuals as asocial, isolated, disembodied, strategic actors, as communitarians often argue.<sup>921</sup> The proposal is based on a notion of a complex embodied, socialized, psycho-sexual individual with a developed and differentiated capacity to reason.<sup>922</sup>

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<sup>917</sup> Under a rule of law where the right to privacy is a *Grundrecht*.

<sup>918</sup> Consider in this connection that Rawls regards two regimes as compatible with his principles of justice: "a property-owning democracy" and a "liberal socialism" (2001: 135-140). In the latter regime "the means of production are owned by society" (op.cit.: 138).

<sup>919</sup> For a thorough critical discussion of the libertarian notion of self-ownership, adopted from Locke, see G. E. Cohen (1995).

<sup>920</sup> For critical discussions of Rawls on this point, see Okin (1989), Cornell (1998), Nussbaum (1999). For critique of recent critique of liberal contributions on this point – from a liberal-feminist perspective – consider Okin (2002).

<sup>921</sup> Communitarians have claimed that the liberal idea of individuals as rights-holders is based on this flawed notion of human nature (Sandel 1989, Glendon 1991). Right are, however, decisive, precisely because they protect our freedoms as concrete, vulnerable persons from offenses in our interactions with others. Those who defend rights, seldom reject basic sociological and anthropological ideas about human interaction. Their concern is to outline and justify normative regulations of this interaction. Consider, for example, how Jean L. Cohen explicates the relationship between individual reproductive rights and the social embeddedness of women's actual reproductive choices: "Thus on the privacy justification of reproductive choice, a woman may decide for or against abortion on the basis of her community's values or her religious worldview, or after discussion with "significant others – her relation to tradition, community, or loved ones is not in question here. *Her right to decide does not dictate the basis of her decision*" (my emphasis, 1996: 198).

<sup>922</sup> So that it, for example, can participate in moral and ethical discourse.

Fourth, this notion of privacy is not exclusively Western. The demands for individual, private freedoms, similar to those I have outlined above, have been criticized for being ethnocentric (Gilman 1999, Morris 2000). Individual moral norms are, however, not essentially Western. In social struggles of both Western and non-Western cultures, the right to privacy has been and remains a central normative reference (Williams 1991, Cornell 1998).<sup>923</sup> Accepting the arguments for moral individualism appears, consequently, not to require a cultural horizon that is exclusively Western. Debating this, it is crucial to distinguish between the historical genesis or origin of norms and their validity. Even though individualism has had a strong impact on Western culture, certain conceptions of moral individualism may have wider inter-cultural validity.

## **9.6 The struggle for women's privacy**

Why put the right to privacy on the feminist agenda? What injustices may the right to privacy protect from that are of particular relevance from a feminist point of view? Let me give some examples.

A woman's right to a room of her own protects her as an individual; it protects her status as person. The conception of privacy defended here does not protect certain institutions; the family, civil society or the private economic sector, from political intervention, if this is required for moral reasons. On the contrary, this conception of privacy prescribes political intervention in private institution, if necessary, for example, from the point of view of gender justice. When women are exposed to violence from a spouse or a partner, when deep-seated cultural norms reproduce notions of women's altruistic nature and impose on them the main responsibility for child-rearing, housework and the care of older family members, when authorities of religious communities forbid female members to have an education, or when women employees are exposed to sexual harassment at work, intervention in private institutions is essential in order to protect women's individual right to privacy.

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<sup>923</sup> When, for example, struggles are made in the language of civil rights.

The right to a negatively defined domain where we can freely act and express ourselves (1),<sup>924</sup> is decisive for all critical projects, the feminist project included: Free political will and opinion formation is impossible if civil liberties are not guaranteed.

The individual's private freedoms may, however, be restricted with a reference to the norm of equal respect. A man's right to sexual freedom should, for example, not be used to violate a woman's right to sexual freedom and physical integrity (2).<sup>925</sup> The latter right guarantees her, among other things, reproductive freedom, freedom from sexual coercion and violence in intimate relationships, and freedom from heterosexuality.

The cognitive, linguistic and psycho-sexual conditions of individuation must, moreover, be guaranteed (6). The fulfillment of these conditions requires, for example, that we are cared for as children; when we develop basic cognitive and emotional skills, personal and sexual identities (Meeham 1994). In order to become autonomous, responsible persons with "a sense of justice" (Rawls 1999), we have, thus, as children, a right to care. This right makes visible the moral significance of women's care-giving in the family, that has been systematically overlooked in much political and moral philosophy (Pauer-Studer 1998, Schwickert 2000, Hutchington 2001).<sup>926</sup>

The fulfillment of the basic conditions of individuation requires, also, special protection of intimate relationships and life world communication. This implies a right to what Beate Rössler refers to as informational privacy ("Informationelle Privatheit") in intimate issues and freedom from being continually monitored, from "das Panoptikon" (2001: 201, 216). To be relentlessly observed deprives the observed of her subject status. As Jeffery Rosen puts it:

To be observed out of context in private spaces [...] transforms the self from subject to object; and uncertainty about pervasive surveillance makes the development of the subjective self impossible. This objectification is one of the injuries that is a result from being observed out of context – not merely an offense against dignity, or a recipe for social misjudgment, but also an intrinsic injury against the autonomous self (2001: 209).

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<sup>924</sup> The numbers refer to the list outlined in 9.4.

<sup>925</sup> This should be the normative basis of legal regulation of, for example, prostitution and pornography (see for example Cornell 1995, 1998, and Nussbaum 2004), not conventional standards of decency.

<sup>926</sup> To emphasize the moral significance of women's care-giving in the family, does not imply claiming that it is first and foremost women who are obliged to care, or that all care-giving should necessarily be tied institutionally to the family. It is also essential to make a distinction between child-care defined as a basic moral right that obliges political authorities (as in this discussion), and care as a component in a comprehensive ethic for the good life. This distinction has been too little attended to in the feminist ethics of care tradition.

It is crucial for women to insist on their right not to be monitored and objectified in a culture where the female body has long been considered a natural object and eye-catcher, “the second sex”, in the vocabulary of Simone de Beauvoir. For feminist purposes, it is also essential to protect spaces for intimate dialogue. Violations and violence against women in the family had not been put on the public agenda by the women’s movements, if violations and violence had not, initially, been conceptualized as violations and violence in more intimate settings, for example in conversations woman to woman.

Women have, moreover, a right equal to that of men, to hold back intimate information about themselves from the public. Women are especially vulnerable to the terror of publicity and the tyranny of intimacy,<sup>927</sup> because they are symbolically associated with that which is feminine; the personal, emotional and embodied. They are therefore, more often than men, expected to account for intimate details in public: Femininity becomes easily “re-privatized” in the public sphere (Solheim 1998). This exemplifies the value of negative communicative freedom for women (3); their right to freedom from having to explain and justify everything about themselves and their lives to others.

Everyone, also women, should be granted existential autonomy (4). The right to make strong evaluations is a protection against paternalism; if parents force a particular spouse on their daughter, or if welfare state bureaucrats interfere with the life choices of single mothers. The right to make weak evaluations is connected intimately to the right to make strong evaluations (5). Seemingly trivial, everyday dilemmas often have existential, strong dimensions. What are defined as weak and strong evaluations, higher and lower preferences, depend also on who make the definitions. For example, when literary scholars describes literature written by female authors as “trivial”, it is partly because they do not, apparently, see the existential aspects of women’s experiences and evaluations (Scheffels 1996). The right to make weak evaluations is, however, crucial in itself. It is hard to maintain one’s self-respect, if even private, trivial decisions are controlled by others.

Struggling for the right to privacy is, thus, to limit public interference, but through public democratic deliberations (8). There are intimate interconnections between women’s

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<sup>927</sup> As outlined by for example Richard Sennett (1992).

participation as free and equal in the public sphere, and the fact that patriarchal conceptions of privacy are being criticized, and alternative conceptions are introduced and integrated in legislation (7). The right to privacy requires, moreover, a social basis. Developed welfare states are often referred to as women-friendly,<sup>928</sup> among other things, because its benefits and services have contributed to guaranteeing women's personal autonomy (9).

Finally, a woman's right to a room of her own should be understood literally; as a right to a place where she can be left alone. According to traditional socialization, women are more often than men expected to be supportive, to be available, setting aside their own needs if others have conflicting needs: in the family, at school, at work. Everyone deserves a private domain, however; their own room, a door to close, a drawer to lock.

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<sup>928</sup> See Chapter 6.

# APPENDIX

## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

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# ERRATA

- p. 24: ... it goes without saying that it cannot be reduced to a context of social negotiation ...
- p. 26: If this is not the case, if we cannot say that p1 is more warranted than p2 ...
- p. 46, n. 82: ... quantum physics [...] from a feminist point of view” (Haack 1998: 116).
- p. 67, n. 136: ... “Rationalitätskriterium, praktische Grundnorm und regulative Idee” ...
- p. 68, n. 140: ... norms justified in actual fallible discourse (approaching the infallible ideal of argumentative discourse presupposed in such discourse) or as ethical-political prescriptions.
- p. 75, n. 160: ... whether they in fact behave as strategic egoists ...
- p. 77, n. 166: ... between the truth-idealization and the rightness-idealization ...
- p. 78, n. 168: ... theoretical justification free from ‘values’ qua *moral norms* ...
- p. 79: How should genuine inquirers relate to ethical claims ...
- p. 80: Thus, in contrast to how they are pictured by Haack ...
- p. 81, n. 174: ... theoretical justification free from ‘values’ qua *values* ...
- p. 87, n. 194: Haack suggests that there are funding-priorities ...
- p. 98: ... the essentially social practice of reason-giving and reason-taking ...
- p. 102, n. 230: See for example Martin Hollis’ (1982) ... critical discussions ...
- p. 108: ... whether there are also persuasive patriarchal structures or patterns on other levels ...
- p. 128: There are differences between women’s and men’s experiences ...
- p. 129: ... this is what she seems to say.
- p. 137: The reflexive discourse may, however, also have distinctive ...
- p. 139: The ambition behind the agency-studies were critical: to reveal the patriarchal and capitalist oppression ...
- p. 140: First, a self-reflective wave in this research field can indeed be identified the last ten to fifteen ...
- p. 144: ... *Kvinder, Køn & Forskning* ...
- p. 146: ... might be taken to refer also to research carried out outside ... I am analyzing here. In Norwegian *kjønn* denote both ‘sex’ and ‘gender’ ...
- p. 152: Philosopher Linda M. Rustad argues for example ...
- p. 155, n. 375: ... argues that radical modern individualism is community-undermining.
- p. 156, n. 377: ... like Nina Karin Monsen (2000) ...
- p. 159: One example is social anthropologist ...
- p. 169: ... some reasonable ranking of the values in question.
- p. 180: ... autonomy is both impossible and morally suspect.
- p. 211: Her view, that ethical universalism is hardly or not at all achievable, is however compatible with ...
- p. 226: ... as expressions of “the power of goodness in the political sphere” ...
- p. 238: ... the means of transforming the gendered power structures of work: ...
- p. 240: “Distributive inequality is a far too narrow concept” ...
- p. 259, n. 775: ... , as well as the discussion of an alternative rationality ...
- p. 265: ... that are claimed precisely to be universally valid ...
- p. 267: ... very often, be interpreted as attempts to transform ...
- p. 274, n. 794: ... from the 1970s to the 1990s ...
- p. 275: ... for example a less policy-oriented focus, is incompatible with sticking to the project of modernity.
- p. 280, n. 805: *Patriarchy in a Welfare Society*
- p. 290: ... to conceptualize the battle for equality in terms of ...

- p. 290: Feminization from below has above all been about including women ...
- p. 300, n. 838: In Chapter 8 I argue against their principle of gender balance.
- p. 300: ... we could reach a situation where on the contrary parts of the active workforce could have very low salaries, and even fall below the poverty line.
- p. 315: ... justification is relative to audience (which is to defend a purely instrumental notion of what a good argument is).
- p. 318: Perhaps redescrptions are not to be justified, i.e. with reference to reasons ...
- p. 318/319: However, Rorty might consider 'justification is relative to audience' a genuine contribution to "sentimental education" and "[...] the progress of sentiments" (1998c: 180, 181) – prophetic redescrptions should perhaps not ...
- p. 319: The question the objection in c) raises, is, however, how we can know whether anything we consider as true about reality at some point in time ...
- p. 322: The assertion that a moral norm we are committed to is not right, contradicts that which we implicitly presuppose/contrafactually anticipate as regulative idea/performative idealization when we assert it.
- p. 326: If Fraser now understands feminist critique as a morally based critique ...
- p. 326, n. 880: ... as a political-philosophical exchange ...
- p. 338: ... institutionalized and re-institutionalized after political discussions and social struggles.
- p. 338: To become a public concern is to be made more vulnerable ...
- p. 339: Feminist conceptions of the public sphere are made so radically inclusive, because it is assumed that each voice makes a difference.
- p. 339, n. 907: ... have outlined their critique of the public sphere unreasonably.
- p. 341: ... , if this is what we decide to do ...
- p. 345: ... and freedom from heterosexuality.
- p. 346: ... their right to freedom from having to explain and justify everything about themselves and their lives to others.