

Gender Relations

A: -- G: Geschlechterverhältnisse. -- F: rapports des sexes; – R: -- S: . -- C:

“Gender relations” is a common expression in many fields of research, yet it is hardly ever clearly defined in conceptual terms. At the same time as the discussion of different versions of and approaches to gender relations, therefore, the clarification of the concept of “gender relations” itself also needs to be advanced. The concept should be suitable to investigate critically the structural role which genders play in social relations in their totality. It presupposes that which is a result of the relations which are to be investigated: the existence of ‘genders’ in the sense of historically recognizable men and women. Complementarity in procreation is the natural basis upon which what has come to be regarded as ‘natural’ has been socially formed in the historical process. In this way genders emerge from the social process as unequal. Their inequality then becomes the foundation for further transformations, and gender relations become fundamental regulating relations in all social formations. No field can be investigated meaningfully without complementary research into the ways in which gender relations shape and are shaped. When they are ignored (as is traditionally the case), an image of all relations as implicitly male gains general acceptance. Opposing this tendency and forcing the sciences to research the ‘forgotten women’ was the great contribution of the feminist movement of the last third of the 20th century. Often, though, this perspective is obscured to some extent by the phenomenology of men and women as they relate to each other as effects of gender relations, which thus focuses analysis on relations between particular individuals, as if these were able to be founded upon themselves. In German this is particularly noticeable when the concept of gender relations is expressed in the singular: “the gender relation” which appears in almost all scientific studies (of the 145 relevant titles which, according to an internet search, appeared in German in the period 1994-2000, only 4 use the concept in the plural. In English the plural is used exclusively, while ‘gender’ appears only in the singular). The singular may be appropriate, if it is a matter of the proportional representation of men and women in selected areas. Who uses it in a broader sense consequently has difficulties avoiding an assumed certainty regarding what genders are. In order to define the concept in such a way that it is able to comprehend the moving and transformative aspects of its object, the plural is appropriate. In the widest sense, gender relations are, like relations of production, complex praxis relations. Their analysis considers both the process of formation of actors and the reproduction of the social whole.

1. The French Revolution was the scene of Olympe Marie **de Gouges's** (born in 1748 and executed in 1793, due to her protests and organisation of women's clubs) publication of a manifesto entitled "*Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen*" (1791). Without having an expression such as 'gender relations' at her disposal, she effectively thought total social reproduction as being determined by such relations. Public misery and corruption of governments, she declared, were a product of "the lack of rights of women" (36*). "A revolution is being prepared which will raise up the spirit and the soul of the one and the other sex, and both will work together in the future for the common good" (35*). Without social and political equality of the sexes the revolution would become a farce. Gender relations appropriate to forms of domination were enforced by the law; thus the law would also be a means for the enforcement of emancipatory gender relations. The "unnatural" domination of men over women was derived by de Gouges psychologically: The male "extravagant, blind, [...] bloated and degenerated, wants to command despotically a sex which possesses all intellectual capacities" (35*). Women, kept like slaves in the contemporary society, would consequently, however, begin to rule as slaves over men (Friedrich **Nietzsche** later took up this point from an opposed standpoint, when he depicted the slave rebellion of women). **De Gouges** characterised that doubled reversal as the very quintessence of general ruination. The female sex whose formation had been neglected developed treacherous forms of domination in such a position without rights. Women thus became more harmful than good; as a 'political' means they dedicated their charm to the cultivation of corrupt power over men; their weapon was poison. In all previous politics there had been a de facto domination of women in Cabinet, in the Embassy, in the Command of the Armed Forces, in the Ministries, in the Presidency, in the Bishoprics and in the Sacred College of Cardinals, and "everything which constitutes the stupidity of men [...] was subject to the greed and ambition of the female sex" (41*). **De Gouges** did not pursue, therefore, a discourse of the victim; she thought at an early stage the interpenetration of domination and oppression in the assumption of a fundamental equality of capacity of the sexes. More far-sightedly than later feminisms, she diagnosed the necessity of the inclusion of the concrete social situation in the idea of the social construction of gender. The form of gender relations decided on morality (*Sittlichkeit*), justice and freedom. Brutes developed in deformed relations. The fact that women used their beauty as a lever for the acquisition of power and money was a consequence of their exclusion from regular participation in these goods: "Yet mustn't we admit that in a society where a man buys a woman like a slave from

the African coast, any other way to gain prosperity is closed to her?” (...*) **Brecht** later judged in a similar way (*Me-ti*, 42; vgl. 68)#Ausgabe checken#.

De Gouges linked the oppression of women with their function in the reproduction of the species and further articulated both of these with the law of inheritance and women’s lack of rights regarding the free expression of opinion. On the basis of their bondage (they were not allowed to name the father of their child), many women and, with them, their children, were thrown into poverty, ideologically supported by sanctimonious prejudices against the open confession of fatherhood. “The rich, childless Epicurean has no problem with going to his poor neighbour and augmenting his family” (44*). The mingling which was actually occurring was hushed up in order to maintain the class barriers. However, **de Gouges** also declared marriage to be “the grave of trust and love” (43*). She demanded the entry of women in the national assembly (36*), access to all public offices for all according to their capabilities as well as equal rights in paid occupations. The state’s expenditure was to be publicly accounted for, the use of budgetary funds by women according to their needs to be sued for. A “social contract” between the sexes was supposed to protect the free decision of individuals on the basis of affections, protect their rights regarding joint assets and also give recognition to children born outside of wedlock. The opponents of these politics were “the hypocrites, the prudes, the clergy and their entire infernal following” (44*).

The following elements which strengthen a concept of gender relations can be gained from **de Gouges**: egalitarianism in relation to the sexes is heuristically fruitful; relations of subordination of one sex lead to brutality and the ruination of society; it is important to think actors in gender relations in their particular structures of power and subjugation (slave morality) and their consequences; Law as a form in which the dominant relations are reproduced is to be noted in the *dispositif* of gender relations. The assignment of the reproduction of the species to women as a private affair instead of a social solution is accorded a fundamental status.

2. Ethnological studies on gender relations in the development of humanity emerged with the evolutionism of the 19th century. They referred in the first instance to matriarchy and patriarchy. The most well known representatives are Johann Jakob **Bachofen** and Lewis Henry **Morgan**. The Jesuit Joseph-Francois **Lafiteau** (1724), who associated the image of feminine domination in antiquity and in Native American groups with specific forms of social regulation like autonomous self-governance of villages and a type of council system, is regarded as a precursor. He showed the connections between systems of inheritance and descent founded upon the

mother's side, political rights of women and a differentiated spectrum of activities which undermined the focus upon the mother.

While preparing for his work *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, **Engels** read **Bachofen**, alongside **Marx's** excerpts from **Morgan** and others. It was **Bachofen** who became the most influential for the reception of this field of research in Marxism. Among others, **Paul Lafargue**, **August Bebel**, **Franz Mehring**, **Max Horkheimer**, **Walter Benjamin** and **Ernst Bloch** referred to him, and he also played a decisive role in later feminist discussions.

Bachofen presented (from 1861) material studies on the basis of a re-reading primarily of classical mythology. Central was the idea that the maternal principal was expressed in love, peace, freedom, equality, humanity and commonality and therefore that the dominance of women which was based upon matriarchy represented the "civilised" part of humanity's history. He portrayed development as a violent-subversive dialectical process. Monogamous marriage was represented as a women's victory after a long drawn-out struggle against the humiliating institution of hetaerism. It was a victory which was difficult to win, because marriage as an exclusive association seemed to injure the divine decree. Hetaerism thus also appeared as accompanying atonement. Accordingly, he read Greek mythology as a history of the struggle between powers which affirmed the legality of marriage (Demeter) and those which sought to undermine it (those related to the hetaerism). The hard road from mothers to the domination of women conflicted, according to **Bachofen**, with the sensual and erotic dimensions of the "life of women"; the latter undermined "necessarily more and more the Demetrian morality and ultimately reduced matriarchal existence back to an Aphroditean hetaerism patterned after the full spontaneity of natural life" (102; trans. modified). "The progress from the maternal to the paternal conception of man forms the most important turning point in the history of the relations between the sexes" (109); "the triumph of paternity brings with it the liberation of the spirit from the manifestations of nature, a sublimation of human existence over the laws of material life" (ibid.). - **Bachofen's** criteria became decisive for the further debates concerning matriarchy: female lines of descent, group sexuality with the impossibility of determining the father; social and political communal participation, complemented by communal property, and including the contradictory gender stereotype of the woman-mother, morally superior, on the one hand, natural, on the other. This final element served further to transfigure the matriarchy into the originary form of social organisation.

Bachofen used the concept of 'gender relations' alternately in the singular or in the plural. He thought the sexes as fixed in their determinate qualities and limited his interpretations primarily to legal and religious forms. Departing from a strict attribution of that which is naturally female and male, he 'found' in classical mythology precisely those commonly accepted thought-forms: the opposition of reason and emotion, nature and sensuality, spirit (*Geist*) and culture. Here it can be observed how veneration of women and enthusiastic attribution of a feminine nature can function as the reverse side of the oppression of women, by transfiguring them in compensation. - Ernst **Bloch** diagnosed that **Bachofen's** heart was for the matriarchy, his head for the patriarchy (1961, 119*), so that at the end he finally foresaw the detested communism as a return to the figures of the mother. - Because **Bachofen** derived the real relations of life out of their celestial forms (myths, religion) instead of vice versa, the real work, that is, of deciphering domination and oppression in gender relations and the utopian forms in which they were figured, remained still to be done.

Morgan (1871) combined a re-reading of ancient and particularly Greek and Roman sources as well as those of the Old Testament with ethnological reports about tribes in Asia, Africa and North and South American (his fundamental reference were the Iroquois). He depicted two lines of history: technical-civilising progress (invention and discovery) and the development of institutions from group marriage to the monogamous family and the state. The description of invention included livestock breeding, agriculture, pottery, in short, the whole of human life, since the question of the spread of humans over the whole of the earth depended on progresses in the forms of sustenance of life. **Morgan** didn't speak of matriarchy, but of descent in the female line; his chief criteria were economic: occupation of land in common, work in common, a budget of a communist type. According to his view, there had been an originary community which consisted of equals. The development of private property led to the undermining of collective structures. A chief focus of his researches was the process of separation of family forms and lines of kinship; he comprehended the latter as passive, the family as active, and kinship structures as fossils of earlier forms of organisation. Forms founded upon descent in the female line interested **Morgan** because they preceded the emergence of property and its accumulation. - A theory of gender relations can gain from **Morgan** the ideas of the development of the powers of production, of the obtaining of the means of sustenance of life and of the forms in which procreation and rearing are organised, all of which are to be thought in their mutual interpenetrations.

3. In his first sketch of a critique of political economy, the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, **Marx** spoke of “both sexes in their social relations” (MEW 40, 479*), a formulation which can be used for a theory of gender relations. The early **Engels** spoke of the relation of the sexes, but he meant essentially the relationship between men and women. From their early writings, both **Marx** and **Engels** were concerned with man-woman relations free of domination which they anchored integrally in their project of social emancipation. The famous sentence, taken up from **Fourier**, in which they argue that the “degree of female emancipation” is “the natural measure of general emancipation” (HF, MEW 2, 208*), established the principle that the development of humanity can be read off from the development of the relationship of the sexes, “because here, in the relation of woman to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident” (ibid.*). According to the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, “the relation of the man to the woman”, determines “to what extent man’s need has become a human need, to what extent man has become, in his most individual being, at the same time a social being” (MEW 40, 535; Herv. Getilgt*).

The scenario of *The German Ideology* moves the problematic of the sexes onto centre stage. Among the “moments”, “which have simultaneously existed from the beginning of history” is the one in which “humans, who daily reproduce their material life, start to produce other humans, to procreate [...] This family, which in the beginning is the only social relation, later becomes subordinated when the increased needs create new social relations and the increased number of individuals creates new needs” (DI, MEW 3, 29*). And from the beginning they state: “The production of life, both of one’s own in work and of others in procreation, already appears immediately as a double relationship – on the one hand a natural one, on the other hand a social one – social, in the sense that we can understand it as a cooperation of several individuals. From this we conclude that a certain mode of production or industrial stage is always connected with a certain mode of cooperation or social stage, [...] therefore ‘the history of humanity’ always has to be written and elaborated in interrelation with the history of industry and exchange” (29f*). Un-noted here is only that the complementary rule must also be regarded as valid, namely, that political-economic history is never to be studied in abstraction from the history of those natural-social relations. The remark that “the family” becomes a “subordinated relation” demands that the process of this subordination is specially to be investigated. *The German Ideology* contains a series of remarks regarding how development in this area proceeds. The “unequal, quantitative just as much as qualitative, distribution of labour and of its products [...] property, which has its seed, its first form, in the family where women and children are the slaves of men” (32*) is

regarded as fundamental. The “latent slavery in the family” was comprehended as “the first property”, which, the authors emphasised, “here already corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists, according to which it is the power of disposing of the labour-power of others” (ibid.*). The division of labour developed further together with needs on the basis of surpluses which generated, in its turn, further surpluses, just as independent production of the means of life was both a result of an “increase in population” and in its turn promoted this (21*). The division of labour further contained the possibility of the possession by different individuals of “pleasure and labour, production and consumption” (32*); it was therefore at the same time a precondition of domination and of development. Two forms of domination which overlap each other had determined the progress of history: the power of some to dispose of the labour-power of many in the production of the means of life and the power of (the majority of) men of disposing of women’s labour-power, reproductive capabilities and the sexual body of women in the ‘family’. The contradictory inter-penetration caused the development of community to advance at the same time as the destruction of its foundations, supported and borne by gender relations, in which, for reasons bound up with domination, the socially transformed was claimed to be natural and the sensuous-bodily substance was subordinated with nature.

In their works on the critique of political economy **Marx** and **Engels** time and again ran into blockages which were forms in which gender relations were played out. Both noted carefully the composition of the new factory personnel according to sex. Marx made the following excerpt: “The English spinning mills employ 196,818 women and only 158,818 men. [...] In the English flax mills of Leeds, for every 100 male workers there were found to be 147 female workers. In Dundee and on the east coast of Scotland as many as 280. [...] In 1833, no fewer than 38,927 women were employed alongside 18,593 men in the North American cotton mills” (MECW3 244). After the analysis of a multitude of statistics, **Engels** came to the conclusion that in the English factory system in 1839 at least two-thirds of the workers were women. He called this a “displacement of male workers”, “an over-turning of the social order”, which would lead to the dissolution of the family and neglect of children. He didn’t further consider at this stage the gendered division of labour which lead him to view the labour force as essentially male (*Lage*, MEW 2, 367f, 465*). A little later he discovered that in the social division of domestic and non-domestic labour the agent of the first, independently of the respective genders, was dominated by the agent of the second. Such a discovery grasped a fundamental element of gender relations of domination. Nevertheless, **Engels** gave an account of the outrage over the situation of the factory workers essentially with categories of morality (deterioration of morals). This made it difficult to

see the interrelation as an effect of gender relations specific to conditions of capitalist exploitation. He recognised “that the sexes have been falsely placed against one another from the beginning. If the reign of the wife over the husband, as inevitably brought about by the factory system, is inhuman, the original rule of the husband over the wife must have also been inhuman” (MEW 2, 371*). He located the problem in the community of goods with unequal contributions. He concluded that private property undermined the relationships of the sexes. Conversely, he thought that the proletarian family, because it was without property, was free of domination. “Sex-love in the relationship with a woman becomes, and can only become, the real rule among the oppressed classes, which means today among the proletariat [...] Here there is no property, for the preservation and inheritance of which monogamy and male domination were established” (MEW 21, 73*). The idea functioned as an ethical ideal in the workers’ movement. As a pronouncement on an actual here and now it was always contradicted by the facts. It missed theoretically the function of the division of labour between house and factory and therefore the role of gender relations in the reproduction of capitalist society. **Engels’s** further interest was directed in particular to the man/woman relation, not the investigation of how gender relations traverse all human practices. He expected from communist society that it would “transform the relations between the sexes into a purely private matter [...] into which society has no occasion to intervene. It can do this since it does away with private property and educates children on a communal basis, and in this way removes the two bases of traditional marriage, the dependence rooted in private property, of the women on the man, and of the children on the parents” (MEW 4, 377*).

In *Capital Volume I* **Marx** noted that the maintenance and reproduction of the working class as a condition for the reproduction of capital remained left “to the self maintenance and drive to procreate of the workers” (MEW 23, 598*). This is the case, except for forms of ‘care for the poor’ and ‘social welfare’, but can nevertheless mislead theory into moving the process as a private matter out of the focal point of interest and possibly to treat it as a mere gift of nature. An effect of the control of men over women in the family consists in the lesser value of the labour of women compared to that of men. This situation makes women’s work particularly suitable for capitalist exploitation as cheap labour.

Marx evaluated official reports in which the workers appeared grammatically, in the first instance, as gender neutral; as soon as there were women and children, they were named as extras and as a peculiarity. Thus an implicit maleness appeared in the diction; at the same time, Marx registered that male workers were being replaced by women and children. The consequence of this practise, in gender relations which remained the same, was the destruction of the natural foundations of the working class.

Because the maleness of the proletariat was implicitly assumed in the texts, it was not really made explicit that the form of wage labour actually presupposed the male wage-labourer, precisely because gender relations in which the labour of the production of the means of life (in so far as this occurred in commodity forms) is a social affair which occurs under private forms of domination. The reproduction of the workers (*K I*, MEW 23, 186*), on the other hand, entrusted privately to individual families, did not appear to be a social affair. The interpenetration of capitalist exploitation and the division of labour in traditional gender relations demonstrated that capitalist production is based, among other elements, upon the oppression and exploitation of women. - In the midst of concentrating on capitalism Marx had a flash of inspiration: “However it still remains true that to replace them they must be reproduced, and to this extent the capitalist mode of production is conditional on modes of production lying outside of its own stage of development” (MECW 36, 108). (The idea was taken up by Rosa **Luxemburg** in *The Accumulation of Capital*).

Already in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* **Marx** had noted “a greater economic independence” of women, because “a wider area of employment opportunities has been opened up” to them by “changes in the organization of labour”, as a result of which “both sexes [had been] brought closer together in their social relations” (MEW 40, 479*). In *Capital Volume I* he then directed his attention to the “peculiar composition of the body of workers, composed of individuals of both sexes” (MEW 23, 446 et sq.*), and finally the placement of women “in socially organised processes of production outside the domestic sphere” as a “new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relation between the sexes” (514*). Here the relation (in the singular) is actually meant as an attitude or disposition to one another, emanating out from relations in work into all fields. The cooperative labour of the sexes in close quarters and at night was regarded by Marx, under the given relations of production, as a “pestiferous source of corruption and slavery” (ebd.*; vgl. **Engels**, *Lage*, MEW 2, 372, 465*); the hope remained, however, that they would become a “source of humane development” as

soon as “the process of production is for the worker” (ibid.*). - This perspective was restricted in the lands of state socialism to the professional occupation of women. Since the totality of labour necessary for reproduction and its reinforcement in morality, law, politics (in shorthand: ideology), sexuality etc. did not enter into the analysis, this solution misunderstood the persistence and complexity of gender relations. In the workers’ movement, that foreshortening lead to the adoption of a theory of the succession of the struggles for liberation, in which it was overlooked that gender relations are always also relations of production, and thus, how strong the relations of reinforcement and support for the reproduction of the current form of relations in their totality are. The relations of production cannot, therefore, be revolutionised first and the gender relations only after.

In the last three years of his life (1880-82) **Marx** made copious ethnological excerpts from **Morgan**, John Budd **Phear**, Henry Sumner **Maine** and John **Lubbock**. Lawrence **Krader** designated them as “empirical ethnology which is simultaneously revolutionary and evolutionary” (Einl., *Ethnol*, 12). He understood their perspective in the following way: “the originary community, consisting of equals, is the revolutionary *form* of society which will have a new content after the historical transformation which humanity has experienced and after exploitation in the form of slavery, serfdom and capitalism has been overcome” (14 et sq.). He thought to have found in ethnology proofs for the possibility of cooperative institutions and communal, community-oriented labour relations.

The excerpts from **Morgan** constituted the major share of this work. The focal points of the “family” and kinship make them fruitful for the question of gender relations. **Marx** mostly followed **Morgan’s** views, so that astonishment when gender relations are not mentioned and when they are treated applies to both authors. The material suggests the view that human development proceeded from an original communist equality to domination and oppression through the emergence of private property, that this process was accompanied by progress and, crossing stages of barbarism, led to civil society. Inventions and discoveries assured not only survival, but also the possibility of surplus and thus the foundations for the emergence of wealth, which became an historical reality to be privately appropriated.

Marx excerpted exactly the kinship lines demonstrated by **Morgan** – from the family related by blood to the punaluan and the syndyasmian or pairing family, to the patriarchal family (which he held, with **Morgan**, to be an exception) and to monogamy. That which interested him in

Morgan was the idea, later to be more fully developed by **Bloch**, of a non-contemporaneity. “The system has out-lived the uses from which it emerged, and survives as if those uses were still valid, even though such a system is in the main unsuited for present conditions” (*Ethnol.*, 135*). Which women and which men were allowed to marriage each other in group marriage thus became relevant, because the tribal lines of the gentes were determined in this way. Everywhere there were female lines of descent, and the children remained with the mother or with the gens of the mother. The father belonged to another gens. At the beginning of humanity’s development inventions aimed to achieve the acquisition of the means of subsistence and were in this way easily conceivable for both sexes. “Common estates and agriculture in common must have led to communal housing and a communistic household [...] Women received much, with common supplies and households, in which their own gens had a numerical predominance, provided for, a great security” (344*). The situation of women deteriorated “with the rise of the monogamous family, which abolished the communal dwelling, placed the woman and mother in a single family dwelling in the midst of a purely gentile society and separated her from her gentile kin” (*ibid.**). One gains the impression that regular military campaigns led to the invention of better weapons and to the formation of military leaders; the bow and arrow, the iron sword (barbarism) and firearms (civilisation) were regarded as important inventions.

Inasmuch as chieftains, councils and political assemblies are considered – the selection criteria are noted as personal competence, wisdom and eloquence (199*) – women are represented only enigmatically: the Iroquois “women were allowed to express their wishes and opinions through a speaker which they had selected themselves. The council made the decision” (227*). After the forms of marriage, the excerpts are concentrated on the development of the cultivation of grain, domestication of animals, military campaigns and the development of property, and later the development of political society. The activity of women, however, is conspicuous in its absence. For example, the following isolated note from **Morgan’s** presentation of the Moqui-Pueblo native Americans appears (without commentary): “Their women, generally, have control of the granary, and they are more provident than their Spanish neighbours about the future. Ordinarily they try to have a year’s provisions on hand” (Morgan, 536, *Ethnol.*, 179*). One can implicitly gather that responsibility for children - as presumably also for births; at any rate humans multiplied themselves rapidly, but even this notice only obtains a reference to increased means of consumption (172*) – held women back from the warpaths. Such wars, however, when successfully issuing in conquests, lead to an accumulation of wealth. “Following upon this, in

course of time, was the systematic cultivation of the earth, which tended to identify the family with the soil, and render it a property-making organization” (**Morgan**, 543, *Ethnol*, 184*). This sheds light on the seeming ‘naturalness’ of male property, succession according to the father’s line of descent and corresponding monogamy. Finally, the head of the family (male) became “the natural centre of accumulation” (*ibid.**).

Concentration on the history of men occurred rather implicitly, and was often revealed in the spontaneous choice of words. **Marx** noted: “The higher qualities of humanity begin to develop on the basis of the lower stages: personal honour, religious feeling, openness, masculinity and courage now become common character traits, but also cruelty, treachery and fanaticism” (*Ethnol*, 176*). He didn’t appear to note the androcentrism. - As long as there was no private property, the line of descent according to the mother was clearly just as little problematic as was her authority. **Marx** wrote again without further explanation: “as soon as more property had been accumulated [...] and an ever greater part was in private possession, the female line of descent (due to inheritance) was ripe for abolition” (342*). Origin was now defined according to the father (patrilineal). This was possible due to the fact, among other reasons, that the gradually forming ‘political’ positions of power (chieftains, councillor, judge) were occupied by men as well.

In **Morgan’s** reading of **Fourier Marx** noted an extension of earlier definitions of the family and of its relations to the broader society: “**Fourier** characterised the epoch of civilisation according to the presence of monogamy and private ownership of land. The modern family contains in essence not only servitus (slavery), but also serfdom, since from the beginning it had a relation to service for agriculture. It contains in itself in miniature all of the antagonisms which later were widely developed in society and the state” (*Ethnol*, 53*).

It can be inferred from the study of **Morgan** and **Marx** that war and private property determined gender relations which undermined the original community and thus promoted development on the basis of inequality. – Unfortunately, Marx was largely silent about a form of ethnological research which, after the realities of who was allowed to marry who and how descent in the female line and ur-communism were connected, considered the activity and lives of women. The re-reading of ethnological studies which broke this silence was the late work of Marxist and feminist ethnology. Claude **Meillassoux** criticised **Marx’s** reading (and its continuation by **Engels**) with having stumbled “into the ideological trap of blood kinship” and claimed that they

had failed to apply their own method, namely, that of analysing the “reproduction of life” and the relations of production as “social relations of reproduction” (1994, 318*). This critique can be extended to the treatment of gender relations by all of the classics. - A more sophisticated version of gender relations in the development of humanity remains almost invisible in historiography if female labour in the context of total social labour and the participation of women in politics and administration are not searched for with the attentive eye of a detective.

The Ethnological Notebooks of Marx were first published in 1972 by Lawrence **Krader**. **Engels**, however, had already in 1884 gathered together **Marx's** excerpts from **Morgan** and the notes from his own reading of **Bachofen** in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, thus providing the material and the style in which the oppression of women was thought. Simultaneously, he had thus strengthened a mode of reading which, to a certain extent, comprehended gender relations as an addition to, and outside of, the relations of production. In his famous passage on monogamy (taking up an insight from *The German Ideology*) he opened up a personal relation into a social one by means of the application of the concept of class to the man-woman relationship: “The first class conflict [...] coincided with the development of the antagonism between husband and wife in monogamous marriage, and the first instance of class oppression with the oppression of the female sex by the male” (MEW 21, 68*). Furthermore, with monogamous marriage began an “epoch in which every step forward was simultaneously a relative backward step, in which the well-being and the development of the one group prevail through the misery and repression of the other. It is the cell form of civilised society in which we can already study the nature of the oppositions and contradictions which fully develop therein” (ibid.*). - **Marx** had noted to the contrary, incidentally, that “the family – even the monogamous family – could not form the natural basis of gentile society, just as little as today in bourgeois society the family is the unity of the political system” (*Ethnol*, 285*). **Engels's** stirring rhetoric conceals the fact that the form of monogamous marriage does not imply any specific labour relations. Concepts such as “antagonism, classes, well-being and misery” allowed gender relations to be regarded as mere relations of subjugation - as after a war - and not as practices of both sexes. Thus studies on gender relations did not lead to a comprehension of the connection of relations of production, but rather, on the contrary, to a separation of the terrains of the production of *life* and the production of the *means* of life. That admittedly corresponds to the development of capitalism, but nevertheless prevents seeing precisely the generalising structures of the established state as an effect of the relations of production. In the Preface to *Origin*,

Engels sketched out what was supposed to be understood by “production and reproduction of immediate life”: “On the one hand, the production of the means of life, of the objects of food, clothing and shelter and the tools necessary for that production; on the other hand the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species” (MEW 21, 27 et sq.*). He named both “productions” and thereby established the starting-point for a theory of gender relations. However, he impeded its further elaboration by definitions which appeared to establish all labour (nutrition, clothing and housing) on the one side, and, on the other, the family; the latter was distinguished not by specific labour connections, but rather, through relations of kinship. Consistently, following **Marx’s** notebooks of excerpts, he noted in detail in *Origin* the variants of organisation of sexual relations and reproduction, but did not note in what relation the labours carried out in the family stood to total social labour and to the reproduction of society. To this extent his work can be read as an omission to write the history of gender relations as a dimension of the relations of production. Instead, he treated the levels of sexuality and morality - in which **Engels**, though, as **Bloch** noted, obeyed “puritanical motives” when he proclaimed monogamy to be a female victory against “disorderly sexual dealings” and claimed a “mysterious seizure of power” of men on the basis of taking up, all too unconsidered, ideas from **Bachofen** (1961, 118*). - **Engels** gathered much material in order to prove the humiliation of women. However, it also escaped him in this instance that gender relations determine the *whole* society and are not restricted to the domestic sphere. His most famous sentence in this connection presented women as mere victims: “the overthrow of matriarchy was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*” (MEW 21, 60f*).

Engels’s perspective for liberated gender relations was the inclusion of women in industry, a movement which he saw already becoming a reality in capitalistically organised production, because modern industry “not only allows female labour on a large scale, but in fact formally demands it, and [...] strives more and more to dissolve private domestic labour into a public industry” (MEW 21, 158*). Since this perspective defined the state-socialist project, the problems can be studied in concrete and historical terms.

Critical conceptual summary - The critical survey of **Marx** and **Engels** demonstrates the approach to comprehend gender relations as relations of production just as much as its abandonment. The greatest barrier proves to be the tendency to think of gender relations as relationships between men and women. It must obviously become a rule to investigate the

different modes of production in history as always also gender relations. Neither can be comprehended without the answer to the question how the production of life in the totality of the relations of production is regulated and in which relation they stand to the production of the means of life, in short, how they determine the reproduction of the whole society. That includes the differential shaping of genders themselves, the particular constructions of femininity and masculinity, just as much as the development of the productive forces, the division of labour, domination and forms of ideological legitimation.

4. Politics concerning gender relations emerge in the history of Marxism as a struggle against the ban on abortion, as a demand for gainful employment for women and equal wages for the same work, but also as demands for a better family life (among others, by Clara **Zetkin**), as a promise to raise women up out of the restrictive confinements of the domestic sphere (**Lenin**, alongside many others), and as an attempt to liberate also the feminine psyche from its love-prison (**Alexandra Kollontai**). Finally, in the late twentieth century, there was the demand to create the preconditions which would allow the combination of family work and paid employment. In short, the question of gender relations always emerged as the “women’s question”, which took no account of its connection to the relations of production.

An exemplary exception stands out in Antonio **Gramsci’s** notes on Fordism. His point of departure was the rationalisation of labour on the assembly line (Taylorism), the related creation of ‘a new type of man’ among workers and the political regulation of structural conditions. **Gramsci** introduced the concept of *historical block* for this process. He understood by this the combination of groups in the dominant power relation - in this context, the combination of the mode of mass production, private life-styles and state-sponsored campaigns concerning morality (Puritanism/ Prohibition). In this context gender relations emerged, in the first instance, as a particular subjugation of men under intensified ‘mechanical’ exhausting work conditions for a higher pay which allowed the support of a family and recreation, and which in turn was necessary for the maintenance of precisely this Fordist labour subject. His exhausting work conditions required specific morals and ways of living, monogamy as a form of sex which did not waste time or indulge in excess, little consumption of alcohol, and the formation of house wives who watched over (and were accordingly actively engaged in promoting) discipline, life style, health and nutrition of the family, in short, the mode of consumption. One sees the

disposition of the sexes and thus essential aspects of their construction, along with political regulations. Among other aspects, it can be seen how this whole structure was transformed with the change of the mode of production, and the essential points of articulation which flexibly hold capitalist society together can be recognised in this process. Related to the transition to the high-technological mode of production, **Gramsci's** insights teach how to investigate the transformation by the new mode of production of the relations of manual to mental labour through an examination of gender relations: the new mode of production requires less labour powers than other types and its hegemony is correspondingly differently enforced; it needs another type of intervention by the state; it produces another effect on the terrain of civil society etc. The question of the new labour subject must include the new determination of gender relations, precisely because it concerns life-style, maintenance and development, which to a certain extent represent a 'marginalised centre' of social relations (cf. F.Haug 1998*).

5. The book on the subjugation of women published by John Stuart **Mill** together with his wife, Harriet **Taylor**, and their daughter Helen in 1869 aroused a great sensation and was translated into German in the same year. The goal was a kind of social psychology of gender relations as a foundation for the political and legal equality of women in order to support the struggles for the right to vote, the right to work and the education of women. **Mill** and **Taylor** used the concept of gender relations, even though it became unrecognisable in the German translation ("*Beziehungen zwischen den Geschlechtern*", "relations between the sexes" (Mill 1997, 5*). The primary terrains upon which existing gender relations were thought were habits and feelings, opinions on the nature of men and women and their current positions in society which were derived from such opinions, above all in terms of their legal status. Since "the subjugation of women by men" was "a universal habit", every deviation from this appeared as "unnatural" (24*). Their research was consequently directed toward the terrains of everyday experience, toward the morality which regulated it and the law. The assumption of naturalness of the "feminine" was criticised, and instead comprehended as a product of an education in dependency, a "result of imposed oppression according to the one tendency, of unnatural stimulation according to the other" (38*). The main focus of their work was the legal treatment of women: for example, the contract of marriage (51 et sqq.), which they portrayed historically from stages of violence to the modern form of "slavery" in which women, to a large extent without legal status and without property, owed obedience to their husbands, "in a chronic situation of simultaneous bribery and

intimidation” (22*), until, finally, a gradual correction in the direction of the right of divorce. Olympe **de Gouges** remained unnamed, but her ideas are certainly present. “Marriage”, declare **Mill and Taylor**, “is the only form of serfdom still recognised by our legal system. There are no longer any slaves except for the ladies of the house” (131*). Humanity would gain infinitely if women were allowed to develop their capabilities and to apply them (136 et sq.*). According to the assumption of a masculine arbitrary violence, no attempt was undertaken to establish a connection to the relations of production. Their own field of experience, the fate of women of the bourgeoisie, allowed them also to overlook the formation and education of the female proletariat.

- It remains to be recorded that since the end of the eighteenth century insight into the constructed nature of gender, in particular, the gender of women - first, in **de Gouges**, now in **Mill/Taylor** - belonged to the standard stock of knowledge. Two centuries later this insight emerged again with no sense of its own history, as if it were the most novel of all ideas.

Just seventy years after **Mill/Taylor**, Virginia **Woolf**, in bourgeois gender relations which had remained relatively the same, farewellled the hope that society would gain when women were placed on an equal footing with men and could take up the careers reserved for and practiced by men. In this case, she argued, women would become just as “possessive, suspicious, and quarrelsome” as men (1938, dt. 1978, 89*). She detected in the gender relations in which the bourgeoisie reproduced itself the possibility of the capitalist mode of production, of war and of its ideological anchoring. These gender relations produced on the side of the subject: “senselessness, pettiness, malice, tyranny, hypocrisy, immorality in excess” (110*). On the basis of the difference between the practices of the genders she came to the conclusion that the emancipation of women required another society in which, among other things, formation and development would not be “for capitalism, market, war, but for the perfecting of spirit and body, life and society” (ibid.*). Although, again, limited to the bourgeois class, knowledge was here developed concerning the structural role of the sexes in the reproduction of the relations of production.

Ten years later Simone **de Beauvoir** explained that the oppression of women was due to the “capacity for reproduction” of woman; she saw feminine sub-alternality maintained by the socially specific construction of social gender of the time. “The balance of the productive and reproductive powers is realised in different way in different economic epochs of humanity’s history. These, however, create the pre-conditions for the relationship of the male and female

parts to their descendants and thus also to each other” (1949/1960, 49*). Her conclusion, which was influential for the later women’s movement, was aimed at the employment of women in order to make them economically independent from men, the structural integration of technical progress in human reproduction and the transformation of the ideological-psychological construction of the feminine.

6. Important elements for a theory of gender relations were developed in the discussions concerning a Marxist anthropology in France in the 1960s. Insights into the connection of political and cultural dimensions in the development of modes of production were supposed to be gained from the analysis of pre-capitalist societies. A point of contention, among others, was what “the economic in the last instance” meant. Maurice **Godelier** grasped the role of relationships of kinship for the regulation of the relations of production as a question of a dominance which then “ ‘integrates’ all other social relations”, which not only defines relations of descent and marriage, “but also regulates the particular laws regarding the disposal of the means of production and products of labour, [...] and when it possibly serves as a code, as a symbolic language, which expresses the relations of humans among one another just as much as their relations to nature” (1973, 49*). Claude **Meillassoux** responded critically that kinship was for **Godelier** the “Alpha and Omega of any explanation of primitive society, since kinship generates, as it were, its own determination. It follows from this that the economic is determined by social development [...] and historical materialism no longer possesses any scientific basis at all” (1983, 63*). The critique is unjust, since **Godelier’s** formulation of the research question posed to the social sciences was: “Under what conditions and according to what reasons does any particular instance assume the functions of the relations of production and control the reproduction of these relations and thus the reproduction of the social relations in their totality?” (1973, 50*). He understood this as a specification of Marx’s formulation of the ultimate determination of the social and intellectual life process by the mode of production.

Meillassoux’s suspicion that in this articulation kinship was given “a doubled status of a base and a superstructure” (1983, 63*) and was even regarded as a key for anthropology is, however, not to be rejected out of hand. Of course the see-saw of instances and dominances vanishes as

soon as kinship relations are grasped as relations of production. **Meillassoux** opened the way for this by defining as the central point of departure the concept of *relations of reproduction*. With this he analysed that a society for its continuance must establish a “satisfactory balance between the number of productive and unproductive individuals and among these [...] a sufficient number of members of both sexes of the right age” (56*). Since this is not given in itself in small cells of production, the oldest, who enjoy a higher standing due to work done in the past, develop a system of exchange of women (57f*); their power shifts “from the control of the means of life to the control of women and from the management of food stuffs to political authority over individuals” (59*). In the proto-agrarian mode of production (which was based in addition upon hunting), these instances of the eldest did not exist; there was kidnapping of women and thus the necessity to protect women, which excluded them from hunting and war. At the same time war gained the meaning of founding the domination of men.

Meillassoux agreed with the view of **Marx** und **Engels** that “women were undoubtedly the first exploited class” (95*), but adds that they were subjected to different relations of exploitation and subjugation according to sexual maturity. He agreed with **Engels** that one could speak of an “historical defeat of the female sex”, but objected that this is not to be linked to the emergence of private property. Rather, it was founded in the relations of reproduction, in which on closer inspection a multiplicity of relationships of dependence are also to be detected among men, differing according to the mode of production. He connected the necessity of marriage with farming, in which the wife became an instrument of reproduction.

Meillassoux showed as an example of the agricultural household how the “relations of reproduction” became “relations of production”, since “the relationships of filiation [have to] correspond to the relationships of dependence and authority which exist in production” (62*). In this case, the relations in reproduction are politically formed, subjugated, however, to the determining constraints of production. In the central themes of the studies on primitive societies - forms of the family, female lines of descent, their dissolution by patriarchal lines of descent, authority of elders, fertility cults, compulsion to endogamy, incest-taboo - he highlighted the achievement of relative independence of the organisation of reproduction. “The social reproduction of the household is no natural process, nor is it [...] a consequence of war, robbery and abductions. It is a political undertaking” (61*). **Meillassoux** held, with **Marx**, to the primacy

of the relations of production and explained that “the place which the relations of reproduction in the organisation and management of the society take” establishes the meaning “which the juridical-ideological idea, i.e., kinship has”, so that relations of reproduction “have the tendency to become accepted in a non-egalitarian class society as fundamental ‘values’” (62*)

The domestic mode of production, the economic centre of primitive societies, continued, according to **Meillassoux**, until the late phases of imperial capitalism and was assimilated to the laws of capitalist class society as a meagre basis of production of life and labour power, preserved there and at the same time destroyed. Accordingly, **Meillassoux** opposed **Marx’s** view (*K I*, 591*) that there was no longer any inflow without costs into developed capitalism at all after the phase of primitive accumulation, overlooking of course Marx’s comment to the contrary (*K II*, 114*).

Following **Meillassoux**, studies became possible which allowed the structural role of the sexes in the regulation of total reproduction (determined by the state of material production) and, in this, the role of politics, ideology, morality and their relative independence to be analysed. Nevertheless he did not keep completely to his approach to think the relations of production on the basis of the relations of reproduction, so that, for example, the power of the oldest appeared to him as masculine, conditioned by production. Here the inclusion of gender relations is to be added.

7. Feminist ethnology concentrated on the treatment of gender relations. Thus Olivia **Harris** and Kate **Young** gave as a reason for their turn from women’s studies to research on gender relations the fact that the relationships between different actors only becomes understandable in connection to the relations of production (1981, 111). As a terrain of analysis they suggested changing from the general terrain of the mode of production to the more concrete one of the “conditions of reproduction of historically-located productive systems” (117).

Engels’s *Origin* has regularly been a starting-point or critical point of departure for feminist ethnologists. One of the first, Eleanor **Leacock**, following **Engels’s** proposal to connect the oppression of women to the emergence of private property, has worked since the 1950s on research into non-class societies in order to grasp in a new way the position of women in

relations of production, distribution and consumption. Her fields of research are, among others, organised hunter-gatherer societies before the emergence of the state. In her re-reading of the studies of **Morgan**, **Wright**, and **Lafiteau**, but also later authors like **Landes** (1938), **Leacock** criticised both their inadequate research of the self transformative socio-economic conditions and their ethnocentric points of view (45 et sqq.). Instead of equality, she spoke of an autonomy of the sexes (30). She criticised the generalisation of the division, common in class societies, of the public and private, doubted the universal representation of the family and noted the absence of leaders, markets and private land ownership as essential dimension of hunter-gatherer societies (36). The division of labour between the sexes was accompanied by a high reputation for women because of their ability to give birth to children. To be noted, according to **Leacock**, is the fact that women in every society make an important economic contribution, but their status is dependent upon “whether or not they can control the conditions under which they work and the distribution of the goods which they have produced” (50 et sq.) Her conclusion is that in societies in which the domestic economy makes up the whole economy, gender relations were not determined by relations of domination (42) and that “household management” was decisive in council assemblies which decided on war and peace.

Inside feminist ethnology there consequently developed three tendencies in opposition to the thesis of the binary division of the history of humanity into a matriarchy and - after a break - a patriarchy as precondition of progress. The idea of women as victims was positively taken up, or rather, updated in a slightly modified form, by a first tendency. Thus the view of Claude **Lévi-Strauss** (e.g. 1971, 1980*), among others, that men everywhere behaved toward women just as culture to nature and that women represented the non-cultural wild element, also enjoyed feminist recognition (cf. e.g. **Ortner** 1974; **Rosaldo** 1974; **Benard/Schlaffer** 1984). Sherry B. **Ortner**, for example, inspired in an equal measure by both Simone de **Beauvoir** and **Lévi-Strauss**, claimed that universal oppression of women stems from the fact that “woman’s body seems to doom her to mere reproduction of life; the male, in contrast, lacking natural creative functions, must [...] assert his creativity externally, ‘artificially’, through the medium of technology and symbols”; the male creates in this way “relatively lasting, eternal, transcendent objects, while the woman creates only perishables – human beings” (1974, 75).

A second group regarded the victim discourse as a result of a masculine mode of research which did not notice (or, due to the separateness of women's culture, could not even perceive) the activities of women. Carol P. **MacCormack** criticised the constructed nature of such a model as a product of the late eighteenth century and demonstrated at the same time the dominatory uses of this mode of thought: "If women are defined as 'belonging to nature', the domination of men over women begins to be regarded in high esteem or even have ascribed to it moral virtue, analogous to the virtue of human domination over natural sources of energy or the libidinal energies of individuals" (1989, 75). The perception of non-European women and their symbolical appropriation by means of western ethnology was treated in a similar way. "The conscious and unconscious symbolic reification of the 'primitive' woman in the everyday life, art and science of the metropolises has legitimated her actual subordination and encouraged an activity which continues it" (**Arbeitsgruppe Wien** 1989, 9).

A third tendency of critical-feminist research was directed toward the search for gender-egalitarian societies. Equality was here understood as equal value, because the division of functions is not necessarily accompanied by hierarchy. Ilse **Lenz** (1995), who spoke of "gender-symmetrical societies", criticised the conclusion which was suggested by **Engels's** binary division of history into a matriarchal phase of reproduction and a patriarchal epoch determined by production, namely, that women could only liberate themselves through participation in the latter (38 et sq.). "Gender and domination are simply seen in relation to each other in this binary division of epochs, and the necessary steps of mediation of the economy, society and thought are lacking" (44). The question for ethnological research, on the other hand, had to be "in which form women and men are active in these socio-political processes and which power they derive from them" (45). Research questions were directed toward production, reproduction and sexuality, knowledge of the body, political authority and symbolic order. **Lenz** rejected the usual concept of power (for example, that of Max **Weber**) as masculine, since it one-sidedly referred to the opportunity to enforce one's will over and against others and was thus limited from the outset to the victor. She comprehended power as determination over processes and resources. Only this allowed the multiplicity of gender relations to be comprehended, to discover, for example, women's power also in patriarchal societies on the "underside" of official power (55), and thus to think in terms of a "power balance", rather than having to think a complete subjugation of one gender by the other (64).

The thesis “that forms of marriage give an excellent insight into the organisation of relations of production specifically relevant to gender in all classless societies” (**Collier/Rosaldo** 1981, 278), was contested by Ute **Luig** (1995) who pushed rites of sexual maturity and of access to economic, political and religious resources back onto centre stage. Her main conclusion: a gender-specific division of labour does not have to be accompanied by hierarchy, dependence and exploitation. “Egalitarian relationships do not correspond to any natural, ordinary situation, but are perpetuated by conscious, social strategies and control mechanisms and are continually formed anew” (95). As preconditions of equality she named the absence of accumulation, that is, the immediate consumption of food stuffs, and, accompanying this, autonomy as a capacity to provide for one’s self. For the most part, **Luig** used the concept of gender relations in the singular. This mode of formulating the question produced the effect that the different practices into which the sexes enter were not seen in connection to the reproduction of society, but rather, on the contrary, social production, hunting and gathering, were comprehended as moments of determination of the interaction of the sexes – as if the genders as such were antecedent and as if society were additionally produced as a particular (e.g. egalitarian) relation of both to each other.

The study of distant cultures and their gender relations led at times to a kind of sophisticated tolerance for which all material evidence appeared to be unimportant. Thus Ina **Rösing** (1999) reported from an investigation of an Andean village in which she claimed to have discovered ten instead of the normal two genders. She demonstrated this in the multiple and changing “gender” allocations of space, time, field and public offices etc. – thus, for example, the sun is masculine in the morning, but feminine in the evening. Research into gender relations was here dissolved into a multiplicity of discourses. Nonetheless, even in this many stranded fabric there is a central thread to be discovered: “The fundamental, everyday division of labour, family life and sexuality are not affected by symbolic genderness” (56). The conspicuous gender symbolism was explained by her materialistically as a recharging of the sexual, in the sense of entreaties for fertility made necessary by the hard conditions of survival in the Andes.

Maxine **Molyneux**, in her re-reading of studies on Gouro-formation (which had been studied by Emmanuel **Terray** (1974) and Georges **Dupré** and Pierre Philippe **Rey** (1978)), demonstrated that leaving the status of women out of an account led to more general conceptual and

epistemological problems. The point of contention was the question of whether or not this was already class society. The focus of the analysis was the relation of elders to the younger men who found themselves in an ambivalent exploitative relation. **Molyneux** showed that opponents and supporters of the thesis of class society departed from a vision of a purely male society (1989, 107). Central for the analysis of any mode of production, however, according to **Molyneux**, was the comprehension of the gender specific division of labour (112). Among the Gouros, the women's surplus-production was appropriated by the eldest, so that they would have represented a class for **Terray**, whose point of departure was observed exploitation rather than property. Attention to women, however, could also have corrected **Terray's** concept of class: In the separation of women from the land and from the product of their work one could have seen "the dissolution of collective property in land and the emergence of relations of private property" (121 et sq.) and consequently the transition from ur-communism to a class society (120). In opposition to **Engels**, **Molyneux** did not see the subordination of women founded in their marginalisation by the development of social production. Rather, she argued that it consisted precisely in the fact that were supposed "to remain a central factor for production" (128), because they brought prosperity. Women and their labour were, thus, essential for the dissolution of community. **Molyneux** used the concept of gender relations, but this was made unrecognisable by the translator as "relations between the sexes" (*Beziehungen zwischen den Geschlechtern*) (132).

The study of feminist ethnology demonstrates, among other elements: an historical materialism of the thing itself demands that gender relations are comprehended as relations of production, that is, demands research into the participation of the genders in different modes of production and thus the investigation of the many and diverse practices and their symbolic expression, and their reinforcement in determinant customs, traditions and value systems. If the standpoint of the reproduction of society is abandoned, the phenomena appear as arbitrary. In the re-reading of existing research it becomes apparent that doubts are appropriate, due to the ethnocentrism and/or andro-centrism in language and concepts; this is also the case for feminist research.

8. The discovery that there was a further system of domination beyond that of capitalism, namely, the patriarchy, raised the question for the feminism of the second wave of the women's

movement of how the interaction of the two types of domination was to be thought. The discussions about chief and secondary contradictions, influenced by Maoism, sought to claim a totality. Its analysis, however, was simultaneously blocked by this same conceptual paradigm. The discussion was conducted within Marxism, by which **Marx** was understood as standing for the centrality of class relations. After the struggles since the 1970s concerning the recognition of housework, the question was further developed into a problematic of the total social economy. The debate was conducted under the name of “dual economy”.

Linda **Phelps** was one of the first who sought to comprehend capitalism and patriarchy as different relations of production: “If sexism is a social relationship in which males have authority over females, *patriarchy* is a term which describes the whole system of interaction arising from that basic relationship, just as capitalism is a system built on the relationship between capitalist and worker. Patriarchal and capitalist social relationships are two markedly different ways human beings have interacted with each other and have built social, political and economic institutions” (1975, 39). Zillah **Eisenstein** proposed to speak of two different modes of production which mutually supported one another (1979, 27); Sheila **Rowbotham** (1973) regarded such a co-existence as merely specific to capitalism; Ann **Ferguson** (1979) coined the term of “sex/affective production” in relations of reproduction as a term for the mode of production occupied dominantly by women. The most well-known was Heidi **Hartmanns** attempt of 1981, in connection to the theses of **Marx** and **Engels** that the seed of the patriarchy is the power to dispose of female labour power (*DI*, MEW 3, 32*), to establish a materialist theory of gender relations. This was aimed against the view proposed by, for example, Juliet **Mitchell**, that there were “two autonomous areas, the economic mode of capitalism and the ideological of patriarchy” (1974, 409). - Roisin **McDonough** and Rachel **Harrison** (1978) insisted that patriarchy could only be comprehended if it was defined historically and concretely in the interaction of “relations of human reproduction” and the relations of production (26). This meant for capitalism the introduction of class relations into the analysis of gender relations. - Gabriele **Dietrich** questioned the priority of commodity production, since “the production of life is a indispensable condition for every further production process; in a socialist perspective, this involved “not only the problem of how we want to get to the association of free producers, but also of how we want to shape that which was called ‘reproduction’ for the society of free humans (1984, 38). Iris Maria **Young** proposed to overcome the “dual system” approaches in the direction of a single theory “that can articulate and appreciate the vast differences in the

situation, structure, and experience of gender relations in different times and places” (1997, 105). Michèle **Barrett** (1983) summarised the debate for her foundation of a Marxist feminism.

9. The analysis of gender relations presupposes the category of gender. The possibility available in English of distinguishing between biological *sex* and social *gender* was the basis for a conjuncture which lasted more than 20 years in which gender was comprehended as socially constructed, to the extent that the concept of ‘gender’ was also adopted in other languages. However, the analysis of gender which - not least of all due to the decline of the women’s movement - had dissolved the apparent naturalness of previous thematics of questions concerning women, had also dispensed with the connection to relations of production which had still been dominant in the debate concerning housework; thus the discussion centred upon the concept of gender, but not gender relations.

The fall of state socialism made it absolutely necessary for Marxist feminists to think the relation of gender relations and modes of production in a new way, not least of all because the now obvious demolition of women’s rights in the former state socialist lands caused by bringing them into line with those offered by capitalism was accompanied by the claim that state socialism had oppressed women just as much as capitalism, and, at the same time, the claim that fallen state socialism’s mode of production was entirely different from the capitalism’s mode of production, with which it had not been able to compete. The mode of posing the problem assumed that gender relations and a mode of production do not have any internal connection. It was not the time for social theory, and thus thinking gender relations as relations of production could be made out to be a relic of thought from days gone past.

The following thesis led to intense controversy: “The dominant economy of exchange, the market, profit and growth is setting out upon an extensive exploitation, not only of employed labour power, but just as much other (third) worlds which do not produce according to the same principles. It is neglecting care for life and its commitment to the people who do these things out of love, out of a feeling of ‘humanity’ and who therefore cannot be treated as the same. The symbolic order, the fields of art and science and the entire model of civilisation are all equally imbued and legitimated by such gender relations as relations of production. That is also the case for subjects themselves as personalities” (F.**Haug** 1993/1996, 151). Hildegard **Heise** saw in this a maceration of the concept of relations of production suited to such unhappy times (1993, 3), while Ursula **Beer** detected the reduction of “Marxist conceptual paradigms” to “a purely illustrative character” (1993, 6). Such conception of gender relations as relations of production

would result in “one of the most essential concepts of Marxism being comprehended in an *anti-* or *un-*Marxist way” and “the *necessary*, in Marxist terms, transformation of capitalist relations of production” would be seen as “a contradiction between male production and female appropriation” (**Rech** 1993). **Beer** regarded it as arbitrary whether the concept of gender relations was used in the singular or the plural; in order to avoid an “unnecessary addition” “of gender relations” “to the capital relation” (3), she spoke of “moments of sexual inequality which are spread across the whole system [...] e.g. the exclusion of women from positions of influence and power, the gender-specific division of labour in the family and at work, cultural production as, to a large extent, men’s business” (1993, 8). Such definitions overlook both that in the lands of state socialism women were almost fully integrated into working life, and that the multitude of female writers can be taken as an indicator that cultural production was also women’s business.

The following concepts were suggested in the place of gender relations: “gender inequality to the disadvantage of women” and “gender domination”, analogous to class domination (**Beer**, 10). Classes, however, can be abolished, they are not a ‘natural’ phenomenon; genders, on the other hand are (although socially formed) also a ‘natural’ phenomenon; the existence of genders is thus not simply an element of “gender domination” as the existence of classes is an element of class domination. – The concept of “gender inequality” is dubious, because “gender equality” would be understandable at the best as an expression of political slang. To speak of genders is to speak of the differences between genders. Or even further: difference is too weak a term for thinking the complementarity which is conditioned by the naturally unequal contribution of the two genders to procreation. Equal rights before the law for women and men places them on the same level as legal subjects, abstracted, that is, from gender. Where equal rights are not really realised and compensatory measures like quota regulations are resorted to, the members of the individual genders are in fact treated in individual cases, departing from inequality, as ‘unequal’, in order to arrive at an average equal treatment in a determinate respect. To speak of “asymmetrical power relations” (**Bader** 1993, 6) or “masculine supremacy” (**Becker-Schmidt** (in Beer 1993, 5) is too weak, because power relationships could only have any effect at all as asymmetrical, and supremacy is a shifting phenomenon, while domination is something structural. “Gender opposition” (**Heise** 1993, 1), formulated following the opposition between classes, is similarly not fully conceptualised. Sexual complementarity is the natural form of mammals, but the dominative development of relations between complementary genders is an

historically variable form of human society. **Heise** feared that thinking of gender relations as relations of production instigated “the substitution of genders for classes” (3). Her general concept was the concept of a “combinatory of genders”, which, however, would only have sense if one sought to model the reality and the mode in which gender relations find their field-specific forms in all social fields. To think all of these forms as a “combinatory” (to be comprehended as a strategic encoding), however, assumes the concept of gender relations.

Gender relations and the category of gender. – Already in 1987, Donna **Haraway** registered a fundamental critique of the explanation of women’s oppression by the ‘sex-gender-System’. Her critique of the biological essentialism of this distinction prepared the way also for the surrender of thinking in terms of gender. This terrain was further explored primarily by Judith **Butler**, who rejected “gender” as a “site of identity for political mobilisation [...] at the expense of race or of sexuality, of class or of geopolitical position/movement” (1994, 133). She radicalised the representation of the socially constructed nature of gender also regarding the part which was taken for granted as biologically given and in this way transposed the *Kampfplatz* to the process of the formation of identity. “There is no ‘I’ before the assumption of a gender [...], to identify one’s self with a gender means to be in a relation to an imaginary and persuasive [...] threat” (110 et sq.). In the symbolic the “sexualised” subject is formed normatively by language (120). - The displacement of power struggles in the assignment of gender allows exclusions, bans and stabilisations to be deciphered as elements of gender relations. The dispute about the respective priority of race, class and gender, which resulted in the corresponding movements falling out with each other in a depoliticising way, can also be productively turned around by the question of the articulation of the one in – and at the cost or rather to the benefit of – the other (133). Butler extended this approach to a fundamental position for productive conflicts for a left which is “universal”, not in the sense of uniformity but rather in that of a perspective (1998, 36 et sq.*). This is the liberating side of Butler’s intervention. She pleaded for a type of democratic coherence (following **Gramsci**) which individuals worked on for themselves and their identities, without always repeating exclusions through unreflected unification. Against the “plundering of the third world” by feminists searching for examples of the “universal patriarchal subordination of woman” (1994, 134) **Butler** proposed “to find the forms in which identification is involved in that which it excludes, and [...] to follow the lines of this involvement for the sake of the map of a future community” (136). The liquefaction of categories is easily comprehended; though the

avoidance of any functionalism for the question of gender relations has the disadvantage of losing sight of how it really also concerns the reproduction of humanity, a necessity from whose support, enabling and contemporaneous marginalisation the actions decoded by Butler obtain their virulence in the symbolic, in language and in the imaginary.

Nancy **Fraser** attacked Jürgen **Habermas's** analysis of modern society as a paradigm of androcentric social theory. Here the capitalist economic system was comprehended as “systematically integrated” while the small family, on the other hand, was understood as “socially integrated” (1981, Bd. 1, 457, 477 et sqq.; Bd. 2, 256, 266*). She demonstrated the wasted opportunity in **Habermas's** model of different fields of material and symbolic reproduction to understand in a genuinely new way the public and the private realms in their interpenetrating relation. **Habermas's** model made it difficult to analyse families as “sites of work, exchange, calculation, distribution and exploitation” - in short, as economic systems (**Fraser** 1994, 183*). That **Habermas** comprehended the raising of children as symbolic, but wage labour, on the other hand, as material, while each of them are both, made the fact that he took up at all the former in his model at once problematic and a supporting argument for the private raising of children as a form of female subordination. **Fraser** understood the weakness of this concept as its inability to thematise the “gender subtext” (Dorothy **Smith** 1984) of the described relationships and arrangements. All mediating personifications are however determined by gender: “Wages were contested, [...] as payment to a man for the maintenance of his economically dependent wife and children” (Fraser 1994, 190*). With Carol **Pateman** (1985) **Fraser** demonstrated that women are not absent in paid occupation, but rather, are present in a different way: for example, reduced to femininity, often to sexualised servants (secretaries, domestic servants, saleswomen, prostitutes, stewardesses); as member of the caring professions with maternal capacities (such as nursing sisters, social workers, primary school teachers); as lowly qualified workers in segregated work places; as part-time workers under the double burden of unpaid housework and paid employment; as additional-wage earners. Thus the official economy is not merely bound to the family by means of money for commodities, but also by the masculinity of ‘normal’ wage labour. Conversely, the consumer “in classical capitalism is the companion and the helper of the worker” and “advertising has developed an entire illusory world of greed built upon the femininity of the consumer-subject” (191*). This is of course dependent upon the product, and changes in this branch of industry which also effect men

struggle not only with the attributes of the feminine, as Barbara **Ehrenreich** (1984) demonstrated in an analysis of *Playboy*. **Habermas's** dramatis personae lacked the child-minder, **Fraser's** critique continued, which he nevertheless needed to cast in a central role in his definition of functions of the family. A consideration of them could have shown the central meaning of gender relations for the “institutional structure of capitalism” (192*). The “citizen’s role”, this connecting-position between the private and the public, is self-evidently masculine - it relates to the participant in political discourse and naturally to the soldier as defender of the community and protector of women, children and the old. It escaped **Habermas** how the protection/reliance structure runs through all institutions and how, finally, “the construction of masculine and feminine gendered subjects is necessary in order to fill every role in classical capitalism” (195*).

Fraser used the concept of gender relations only marginally, though in the German translation it becomes completely casually “the gender relation” (*das Geschlechterverhältnis*) (cf. 211). Her central concepts were gender identity and gender; she thus falls behind her own analysis with her demand for “gender sensitive categories” (196). Finally, she highlights practices into which humans enter for the reproduction of their life. She proposes to understand ‘worker’, ‘consumer’ and ‘wages’ as gender-*economic* concepts, and citizen as a gender-*political* concept. But in this way only the gender typical effects of the social relations of production are noticed. Thus the open questions which Fraser wins out of this extensive engagement appear to be comparatively harmless: should a future society which is not founded upon the subjugation of women (and which therefore needs no firm attribution in the construction of masculinity and femininity) conceive all labour under the form of wage labour, or should the political part of society (**Habermas's** citizen’s role) be expanded through making the raising of children obligatory for all? - Fraser’s critique was at the same time her answer to the “dual economy debate”, whose supposition of a “fundamental distinctness of capitalism and patriarchy, class and gender” had left unclear “how to put them back together again” (8)

Feminist Sociology - Attempts to undertake feminist research in the terms of social theory operate with the concept of gender relations. For Ursula **Beer** (1990), “the gender relation” was limited without exception to “generative maintenance of survival” or “generative reproduction”. As such a “structural element” (77) she claimed to inscribe it in Marxist social theory which she

accordingly renovated when necessary. She understood **Marx's** work as fundamentally a theory of structure, whose central concept was "totality" (70 et sqq.). She screened off "the production of life" conceptually against empirical practices. Nor was she concerned with praxis-relations, but rather with the status which, for example, women's ability to give birth has in a structural theory of society. The view comes from above on a theoretical order in which individuals are allocated a 'categorical' place. That individuals in reality shape their lives either in forms of resistance or those of obedience is not taken into account. The *concepts* which were suggested for "empirical" purposes allow a sociological investigation only at the cost of marginalizing the contradictions in which actual human beings realise themselves: "differentiation of fields of labour" (52) remains vague; "forms of labour/production not mediated by the market" (73, 76 et sq.) resolves only seemingly the problem of the housework debate, as this sum includes not mere activities of the reproduction of life, but also, for example, left-wing theory, gardening, bowling and voluntary work of all types.

Regina **Becker-Schmidt** and Gudrun-Axeli **Knapp** (1995) wanted critically to overcome the limitedness of feminist research, which they thought had been bogged down in the analysis of the construction of gender. Moving "the gender relation" into the centre of feminist sociology was supposed to do this. The research question was how man-woman relationships "are organised in particular historical conjunctures" (7), "to what extent predominant connections and conditions influence the relation of the genders" (8) and conversely, how "gender relationships" react upon society. The way of formulating the question remained structural-theoretical, organised according to the logic of cause and effect. In this way genders themselves appeared to be fixed and society was grasped as a type of space in which human relationships merely occur. They talked of "arrangement of the genders" (following **Goffman** 1994), of "composition of gender relations" or, five years later, evading the difficulty by changing terminology, "gender-relations" (*Gender-Relationen*) (2000, 45). In order to overcome the merely psychologising research of "gender relationships" **Becker-Schmidt und Knapp** comprehend these as "cultural, political and economic" (1995, 18) and related them to "exchange" in "labour, performances, and satisfaction of needs" (17 et sq.) or to "exclusion" from "spaces, terrains of praxis, resources and rituals". In distinction, they here regarded gender relations as "contexts of domination and power in which the social position of gender-groups is institutionally anchored and prolonged" (18). In this way gender relations were articulated to social reproduction like a type of

administrative machine; they are to be studied additionally and appear to function according to their own rules which can simply be modified by the total social reproduction.

In the foreword to **Becker-Schmidt/Knapp** (2000) the use of the singular and the plural of gender relations is described in this way: “If we want to express the mutual social relatedness of gender-groups [...] epistemologically only the concept of ‘gender relation’ makes sense. If we come across empirically on all social levels of a society situations of disparity, if all social orders turn out to be based upon similar determinations of relation, the singular is advisable. [...] The plural is called for when we [...] consider international variability” (154, Fn 38). The linking of the concept of gender relations to international usage was justified by “ethnographical diversity”; by ‘the gender relation’, a cultural order as an expression of structure (social fabric, symbols) was meant. In this way society can hardly be thought practically, even though it strives to somehow bring together structure and activity by means of the concept of “connections” (40). Following **Beer** (1990), it was sought to comprehend the equality of determinant mechanisms in different fields (here, families and servant and service rights) “as an expression of the structure of the relations of production” (165). Alternatively a patriarchal population politics, a genderised division of labour and a masculine politics were supposed to sustain the complementary thought of thinking gender as a structural category. The investigation of diversity, discrepancy and even the contrariness of human practices, however, is blocked by such an expressivist theory. At the end, **Becker-Schmidt** summarised their argument as follows: “Feminist research has not yet succeeded in sketching out a theory of gender relations which would be capable of itemising all of the complexes of causation and motivation-contexts which traverse the relations between gender-groups” (61). But there remained the approach of “itemising all of the motivations and causes”, itself trapped in the irredeemable idea that it is possible to sketch such a model theoretically, instead of researching the practices of humans in the organisation of their life and their reproduction in their inter-connections.

Masculinity research - Robert **Connell** gave the concept of gender relations a fundamental status in this field: “Knowledge of masculinity arises within the project of knowing gender relations” (1995, 44). He recognised that it is not meaningful to speak of genders without relating their foundation historically to the question of the reproduction of the species, upon which “one of the

major structures of all documented societies” (72*) was formed. Connell argued that “definitions of masculinity are profoundly interwoven with economic structures and the history of institutions (1999, 48*), and assumed that in capitalist relations of production the field of human reproduction is subordinated to that of the production of the means of life (understood in the broadest sense).

10. Gender relations, as ‘relations into which men enter in the production of their lives’, are always relations of production, just as, vice versa, relations of production are always also gender relations. The duplication of ‘production’ into the production of life (in the broadest sense, including rearing and care) and the production of the means of life (again, in the broadest sense, including the means of production) was the point of departure for the historical naturalisation of the latter into the system of the economy and – in capitalism – its dominance over the production of life. The state stabilised this dominance in as much as it ensured that the economy did not destroy its own foundations. For the analysis of relations of production, the codification of the whole with overdeterminations, relations of articulation and dependencies must be treated. To research into gender relations as relations of production requires a differential combination of historically comparative studies, attentive to moments of transition, with social theoretical and subject scientific analysis. All of these aspects require clarification.

The development and capitalist utilisation of gene technology, intervening in human reproduction, has now moved so decisively, however, the boundaries between the production of life and goods that the connection of gender relations as relations of production must be thought in a new way. If it could previously be assumed that capitalism allowed, for the purposes of its diffusion, the continuance of the ‘domestic mode of production’ of the family or rather, thrived from it, capitalist industry is now pushing its borders further, into the terrain of the sexual body and its propagation. An antecedent was medical transplants which turned the body into a usable resource of organs and opened up a new field of activity for business just as for crime. Reproductive medicine has moved the borders further. Sperm, eggs and embryos have become commodities; fertilization, training and implantation have become services for sale. The ability to give birth can be bought like labour power or like the right to use a body for sexual gratification. So long as the creation of children was not organised in a capitalist form, the

protection of women and control of the woman's body appeared as a dimension of the second order of the relations of production. Now, however, her organs themselves – just as previously male sperm – are becoming raw material or means of production of a mode of production which has added a further form, that of the 'surrogate mother', to the former forms of individuality – such as house wife, business woman, wage worker and prostitute – according to which sexual bodies were active and positioned in relation to each other. This is the beginning of a development whose effect upon gender relations constitutes the task of future analysis and a politics of emancipation. In gender relations in which social interference in the lives of women with the ability to be mothers and the corresponding protective and blocking strategies was mostly negotiated and diminished, the penetration of the forms of Capital into the sphere of procreation can bring all borders into flux.

At the beginning of the second wave of the women's movement great hopes of liberation were placed in reproductive technology. Shulamith **Firestone** (1975) regarded test-tube babies to be an indispensable revolution, because she thought the oppression of women to be biologically determined. Donna **Haraway** proposed in a fiercely contested manifesto "to infiltrate gene technology with socialist-feminist principles", "to enjoy the blurring of all boundaries (such as those between the human and the machine) and to mark them out responsibly" (1984/1995, 165*). **Haraway** comprehended the "translation of the world into an encoding-problem, into a pursuit of [...] a universal key which subjugates everything to an instrumental control" as an approaching "info-tech of domination" (167*). Since women have lost more than they have won from previous boundary consolidations, they should not withdraw to motherhood, human dignity and similar "innocent" positions, but instead, answer offensively the dimensions produced by the capitalist commissioning of this "info-tech of domination", and the violence against women within it, with their "own biotechnological politics" (169*). Further, they should negotiate openly the problems of gene technology, taking into account gender, race and class as well as labour, poverty, health and economic power. Feminist science fiction novels were an important medium for such negotiation (Joanna **Russ**, Ursula K. **LeGuin**, Marge **Piercy**). A sociological fantasy was developed regarding what a transformation of gender relations by technological and economic development would look like, in the best as well as the worst of cases, if motherhood's attachment to the female body was dissolved, if dreams of an end to all natural lack were satisfied by capitalism in the form of 'flawless' children like commodities for exchange, or the

human-machine-boundary became permeable. Here the threatening destruction of the earth by the neo-liberal unleashing of a savage capitalism was anticipatorily explored. A world in which everything is subjugated to the profit principle cannot maintain itself without increasing self-destruction.

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