

Gender Relations

A: al-‘alāqāt baina al-ġinsain. –
 G: Geschlechterverhältnisse.
 F: rapports (sociaux) de genre. –
 R: polovye/géndernye otnošenija.
 S: relaciones de los sexos. – C: xingbie
 qingkuang 性别情况.

‘Gender relations’ is a common expression in many fields of research, yet it is hardly ever clearly defined in conceptual terms. It is therefore necessary to clarify the concept of ‘gender relations’ itself while discussing different versions of it. The concept should be suitable for critically investigating the structural role that genders play in social relations in their totality. It presupposes that which is a result of the relations to be investigated: the existence of ‘genders’ in the sense of historically given men and women. Complementarity in procreation is the natural basis upon which what has come to be regarded as ‘natural’ has been socially constituted 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 twentieth century. Often, though, the perspective is fundamentally obscured 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 could be founded upon themselves. In German, this is particularly noticeable when the concept of gender relations moves

into the singular: ‘the gender relation [*das Geschlechterverhältnis*]’ 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. Whoever uses it in a broader sense, however, 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** publication of a manifesto entitled *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* (1791). (Born in 1748, she was executed in 1793 due to her protests and organisation of women’s clubs.) 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 ‘scorn for the rights of women’ (89). ‘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’ (88). 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' (88). 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. Since its education had been neglected and it was without rights, the female sex developed deceitful forms of domination. Women thus became more destructive than virtuous; they applied their charm as a 'political instrument' for 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 the 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 the stupidity of men constituted [. . .] was subjected to the greed and ambition of the female sex' (92). **De Gouges** did not pursue, therefore, a victim discourse; she thought, at an early stage, the interpenetration of domination and oppression while presupposing a fundamental equality of the capacities of the sexes. More clear-sightedly than later feminisms, she saw the necessity to include the concrete social situation in the idea of the social construction of gender. The form of gender relations depended 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?' (93). **Brecht** later formed a similar judgement (*Me-ti*, GW 12, 474).

De Gouges linked the oppression of women to 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 to 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, an act ideologically reinforced by bigoted prejudices against public admission of fatherhood. 'The rich, childless Epicurean has no problem with going to his poor neighbour and augmenting his family' (94). The mingling that 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' (93). She demanded the entry of women into the national assembly (89), 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 demanded. A 'social contract' between the sexes was to protect the free decision of individuals on the basis of affection, 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' (94).

The following elements can be gained from **de Gouges** which strengthen a concept of gender relations: 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 receives a fundamental significance.

2. Ethnological studies on gender relations in the development of humanity emerged with the evolutionism of the nineteenth 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 such as autonomous self-governance of villages and a type of council system, is regarded as a precursor. He showed the connections between matrilineal systems of inheritance and descent, political rights of women and a differentiated spectrum of activities that undermined the focus upon the mother.

While preparing 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) empirical 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 that 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 affirming 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 eroded 'necessarily more and more the Demetrian morality and ultimately reduced matriarchal existence back to an Aphroditian hetaerism

modelled on 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 later 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 romanticise matriarchy as 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, intellect [*Geist*] and culture. Here, it can be observed how veneration of women and enthusiastic appreciation of a feminine nature can act as the reverse side of the oppression of women, by romanticising them in compensation. – Ernst **Bloch** (1987) diagnosed that **Bachofen's** heart was for matriarchy, his head for patriarchy, so that, at the end, he finally prophesised abhorrent communism as a return to the figure 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 America (his fundamental reference was 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 progress in the forms of sustenance of life (increase in the sources of sustenance). **Morgan** did not speak of matriarchy, but of descent in the female line; his chief criteria were economic: common occupation of land, work in common, a household of a communist type. According to his view, there had been an originary community consisting of equals. The development of private property led to the disintegration of collective structures. A chief focus of his research 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 productive forces, of the acquisition of the means of sustenance of life and of the forms in which procreation and child-rearing are organised, all of which are to be thought in their mutual interpenetration.

3. In his first sketch of a critique of political economy, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, **Marx** spoke of 'both sexes in their social relations' (MECW 3, 243). This formulation 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 relationships free from domination, anchoring this in the very foundation of 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' (*HE, MECW* 4, 195), established the principle that the development of humanity is to 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 Philosophical 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' (MECW 3, 294).

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' (*GI, MECW* 5, 35). 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' (35). Unrecognised 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 that natural-social relation. The remark that 'the family' becomes a 'subordinated relation' demands that the process of this subordination be specially

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 [. . .], that is, property, which has its seed, its first form, in the family where women and children are the slaves of men' (35) 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' (35). The division of labour developed further together with needs on the basis of surpluses and, in turn, generated 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 (30). The division of labour further contained the possibility of the possession by different individuals of 'pleasure and labour, production and consumption' (33); 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 process 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 to dispose of women's labour-power, reproductive capabilities and the sexual body of women in the 'family'. The contradictory interpenetration 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 together with nature.

In their works on the critique of political economy, **Marx** and **Engels** time and again ran into blockages that 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' (*MECW* 3, 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 did not consider further at this stage the gendered division of labour, leading him to think of the labour force as essentially male (*MECW* 4, 434 et sq.). 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 moral categories (deterioration of morals). This made it difficult to see the context 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' (*MECW* 4, 438). He located the problem in the community of goods with unequal contributions, concluding that private property corroded 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' (*MECW* 26, 180). 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 misunderstood 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 destroys 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' (MECW 6, 332; trans. modified).

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 labourer's instincts of self-preservation and of propagation' (MECW 35, 572). This is the case, except for forms of 'care for the poor' and 'social welfare', but can nevertheless mislead theory into no longer focusing its interest on the process as a private matter 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 masculinity appeared in the diction; at the same time, **Marx** registered that woman and children were replacing male workers. In a context of unchanged gender relations, this practice brought about the destruction of the natural foundations of the working class. Since the masculinity 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 (MECW 35, 182), 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 Philosophical 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 organism of labour', as a result of which 'both sexes [had been] brought closer together in their social relations' (MECW 3, 243; trans. modified). In *Capital*, Volume I, he then directed his attention to the 'peculiar composition of the body of workers, composed of individuals of both sexes' (MECW 35, 424 et sq.), and finally the placement of women 'in socially organized 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' (489). 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 co-operative 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' (ibid.; cf. **Engels**, MECW 4, 438); 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 and so forth 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 forgotten that gender relations are always also relations of production, and thus how strong are the relations of reinforcement and support for the reproduction of the current form of relations in their totality. The relations of production cannot, therefore, be revolutionised first and, only later, the gender relations.

In the last three years of his life (1880–2) **Marx** made copious ethnological excerpts from **Morgan**, John Budd **Phear**, Henry Sumner **Maine** and John **Lubbock**. Lawrence **Krader** designated them as an 'empirical ethnology that is simultaneously revolutionary and evolutionary' ('Introduction', Marx 1972, 12). He understood their perspective in the following way: 'the original 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 he had found in ethnology proofs for the possibility of co-operative 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. What 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' (Marx 1972, 135). Which women and which men were allowed to marry 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 at 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 stability and security, provided with common supplies and households in which there own gens had a numerical predominance' (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 by 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; Marx 1972, 179). One can implicitly gather that responsibility for children – as presumably also for births; at any rate, humans multiplied rapidly, but even this notice only obtains a reference to increased means of consumption (172) – held women back from the warpath. 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; Marx 1972, 184). This sheds light on the seeming ‘naturalness’ of male property, succession according to patrilineal 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’ (Marx 1972, 176). He did not appear to note the

androcentrism. – As long as there was no private property, matrilineal descent was clearly just as little problematic as was the mother’s 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). Parentage 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** characterized 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 services for agriculture. It contains in itself in miniature all of the antagonisms which later were widely developed in society and the state’ (Marx 1972, 53).

It can be inferred from the study of **Morgan** and **Marx** that war and private property determined gender relations, undermining the originary community and thus promoting development on the basis of inequality. – Unfortunately, Marx abandoned a form of ethnological research which, after the complications of who was allowed to marry whom and how descent in the female line and primitive communism were connected, considered the activity and lives of women.

The re-reading of ethnological studies that broke this silence was the later work of Marxist and feminist ethnology. Claude **Meillassoux** criticised **Marx’s** reading (and its continuation by **Engels**) for 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 summarised **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 that, 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' (*MECW* 26, 175). 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 civilized 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' (Marx 1972, 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 one from seeing precisely the generalising imposition of obligations 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' (*MECW* 26, 135 et sq.). He named both 'production' 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 what the relation was between the labour carried out in the family and total social labour and to the reproduction of society. To this extent, his work can be read as a failure 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**, 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** (1967). – **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 patriarchy was the *world-historic defeat of the female sex*' (MECW 26, 168 et sqq.).

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' (MECW 26, 261). 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 of how the production of life in the totality of the relations of production is regulated and their relation 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 that 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 bloc* 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). From this perspective, gender relations emerged, in the first instance, as a particular subjugation of men under intensified 'mechanical' exhausting work conditions for 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 housewives 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 genders 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 that 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 us how to investigate the

transformation of the relations of manual to mental labour by the new mode of production through an examination of gender relations: the new mode of production requires less labour-power 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 and so on. 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'*, 'relationships between the sexes'] (Mill 1997, 3). 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 subjection of women by men' was 'a universal habit', every deviation from this appeared as 'unnatural' (16). Their research was consequently directed toward the terrains of everyday experience, the morality regulating it and the law. The assumption of the naturalness of the 'feminine' was criticised, and instead comprehended as a product of an education in dependency, a 'result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others' (28). The main focus of their work was the legal treatment of women: for example, the marriage contract (35 et seq.),

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 bribery and intimidation combined' (14), 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 actual bondage known to our law. There remain no legal slaves, except for the mistress of every house' (102). Humanity would gain infinitely if women were allowed to develop their capabilities and to apply them (105 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**, writing in a context in which bourgeois gender relations had remained relatively stable, bade farewell to 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 practised by men. In this case, she argued, women would become just as 'possessive, suspicious, and quarrelsome' as men (87). In the gender relations in which the bourgeoisie reproduced itself, she detected 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' (108). 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, education 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 subalternity maintained by the respective socially specific construction of social gender. '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' (46). 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 precapitalist 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 serves as a code, a symbolic language to express man's relation to man and to Nature' (35). Claude Meillassoux responded critically that kinship

was, for Godelier, the 'Alpha and Omega of all explanation regarding primitive societies; kinship in some way is seen as generating its own determination. It follows from this that the economy is *determined* by social evolution [. . .] and that historical materialism is left without scientific basis' (1981, 49). The critique is unjust, since Godelier's formulation of the research question posed to the social sciences was: 'Under what circumstances and for what reasons does a certain factor assume the functions of relations of production and does it control the reproduction of these relations and, as a result, social relations in their entirety?' (36). 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 given 'a double role of both infra- and superstructure' (1981, 49) and was even regarded as a key for anthropology is, however, not to be rejected out of hand. Of course, the seesaw 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 concluded that a society for its continuation must establish a 'satisfactory balance in the community between the number of productive and non-productive members and among these [. . .] enough people of appropriate age of each sex' (42). Since this is not given in itself in small cells of production, the elders, who enjoy a higher standing due to work done in the past, develop a system of exchange of women (43 et sq.); their power shifts 'from control over subsistence to control over women – from the management of material goods to political control over people' (45). In the proto-agrarian mode of production (which was based in addition upon hunting), this authority of the elders 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 became more important for the foundation of masculine domination.

Meillassoux agreed with the view of **Marx** and **Engels** that 'women probably constituted the first exploited class' (78), but added 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 'historic 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 'filiation relations have to correspond to the relations of dependence and anteriority established in production' (47). 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 domestic community's social reproduction is not a natural process, nor is it [...] the result of war, abduction and kidnapping. It is a political enterprise' (46). **Meillassoux** held, with **Marx**, to the primacy of the relations of production and explained that 'the place occupied by the relations of reproduction in social organisation and management' establishes the meaning 'which the juridico-ideological representation, i.e., kinship has', so that relations of reproduction 'tend to become accepted in a non-egalitarian class society as fundamental "values"' (48).

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 (C I, *MECW* 35, 565) that there was no longer any inflow of elements originating outside of the capitalist mode of production into developed capitalism after the phase of primitive accumulation, overlooking, of course, **Marx's** comment to the contrary (C II, *MECW* 36, 105 et seqq.).

Following **Meillassoux**, studies became possible that 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 intention to think the relations of production on the basis of the relations of reproduction, so that, for example, the power of the elders appeared to him as masculine, conditioned by production. Here, the comprehension of gender relations still needs to be adequately integrated into the analysis.

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, worked from 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 were, 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 such as **Landes** (1938), **Leacock** criticised both their inadequate research of the self-transformative socio-economic conditions and their ethnocentric points of view (147 et seq.). Instead of equality, she spoke of an autonomy of the sexes (134). She criticised the generalisation of the division, common in class societies, between 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 (140). 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 they control the conditions of their work and the dispensation of the goods they produce' (152 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 (144) 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. 1968, 1979), 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 raise) 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: 'When women are defined as "natural", a high prestige or even moral "goodness" is attached to men's domination over women, analogous to the "goodness" of human domination of natural energy sources or the libidinal energy of individuals' (1980, 6). 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 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 mediating steps of the economy, society and thought are missing' (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 what 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, originary 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 foodstuffs, 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 was 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 and so forth – 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). She explained the conspicuous gender symbolism 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 a 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 a class society departed from a vision of a purely male society (61). Central for the analysis of any mode of production, however, according to **Molyneux**, was the comprehension of the gender-specific division of labour (62). Among the Gouros, 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' (71 et sq.) and, consequently, the transition from primitive communism to a class society (70). In opposition to **Engels**, **Molyneux** did not see the subordination of women as founded in their marginalisation by the development of social production. Rather, she argued that it consisted precisely in the fact that they were supposed to remain central to production' (76), because they brought prosperity. Women and their labour were, thus, essential for the dissolution of community. – **Molyneux** used the concept of 'relations between the sexes', but this was made unrecognisable by the German translator as '*Beziehungen zwischen den Geschlechtern* [relationships between the sexes]' (78).

The study of feminist ethnology demonstrates, among other elements: an historical materialism which is attentive to real history demands that gender relations be 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, due to the ethnocentrism and/or androcentrism of language and concepts, it is appropriate to proceed with caution and scepticism; this is also the case for feminist research.

8. The perception that there lay a further system of domination beyond that of capitalism, namely, 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 affirm an integral totality. Its analysis, however, was simultaneously blocked by this same conceptual paradigm. The discussion struggled against Marxism, by which **Marx** was understood as standing for the centrality

of class relations. After the struggles of 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 speaking of two different modes of production mutually supporting one another (1979, 27); Sheila **Rowbotham** (1973) regarded such a co-existence as merely specific to capitalism; Ann **Ferguson** (1979) coined the term '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 **Hartmann's** 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 (*GL, MECW* 5, 37), 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 an 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 Marion **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** (1980) 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 twenty 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 the collapsed state socialism’s mode of production was entirely different from the capitalist mode of production, with which it had not been able to compete. This manner 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 by.

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 modern maceration of the concept of relations of production (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 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 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 such as 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 antagonism' (**Heise** 1993, 1), formulated following the class antagonism, is similarly not fully conceptualised. Sexual complementarity is the natural form of mammals, but the development of domination in 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 make 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 an 'identificatory site of political mobilization at the expense of race or sexuality or class or geopolitical positioning/displacement' (1993, 116). 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" prior to its assumption of sex [. . .] to identify with a sex is to stand in some relation to an imaginary and forceful [. . .] threat' (99 et sq.). In the symbolic, the 'sexualised' subject is formed normatively by language (107). – 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 with – and at the cost or rather to the benefit of – the other (116). Butler extended this approach into a basic principle of productive conflicts 'for a Left which is "universal", not in then sense of being unitary or uniform, but rather in the sense of having a universalist perspective' (1998, 36 et sq.). This is the liberating side of Butler's intervention. She pleaded for a type of democratic coherence (following **Gramsci**) worked on by individuals for themselves and for their identities, without always repeating exclusions through unreflective unification. Against the plundering of 'the Third World' [by feminists] in search

of examples of 'universal patriarchal subordination of woman' (1993, 117), **Butler** proposed 'to trace the ways in which identification is implicated in what it excludes, and to follow the lines of that implication for the map of future community that it might yield' (119). The dilution of categories is easily comprehensible; however, 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. It is from the support, enabling and contemporaneous marginalisation of the necessity of the reproduction of the species that the actions decoded by Butler gain their virulence in the symbolic sphere, 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' (1984 (1981), 341, 357 et seq.; 1987 (1981), 234, 243). 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 labour, exchange, calculation, distribution and exploitation' – in short, as economic systems (**Fraser** 1989, 120). 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: 'There was a struggle for a wage, [...] as a payment to a man for the support of his economically dependent wife and children' (**Fraser** 1994, 124). With Carol

Pateman (1985), **Fraser** demonstrated that women are not absent from paid employment, but, rather, are present in a different way: for example, reduced to femininity, often to sexualised servants (secretaries, domestic servants, saleswomen, prostitutes, stewardesses); as members of the caring professions with maternal capacities (such as nurses, 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 supplementary 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 'is the worker's companion and helpmeet in classical capitalism' and advertising 'has elaborated an entire phantasmatics of desire premised on the femininity of the subject of consumption' (125). This is, of course, dependent upon the product, and changes in this branch of industry which also appeal to men come into conflict 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 classical capitalism' (126). 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' (127).

Fraser used the concept of gender relations only marginally, though in the German translation it becomes completely casually 'the gender relation [*das Geschlechterverhältnis*]' (cf. 137). Her central concepts

were gender identity and gender; she thus falls behind her own analysis with her demand for 'gender-sensitive categories' (128). 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 gains from 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'. She claimed to inscribe it in Marxist social theory as such a 'structural element', which she accordingly renovated when necessary. She understood Marx's work as fundamentally a structural theory, whose central concept was 'totality' (70 et seq.). She screened off 'the production of life' conceptually against empirical practices. Nor was she concerned with praxis-relations, but rather with the status that, for example, women's ability to give birth has in a structural theory of society. The view comes from above, from the perspective of a theoretical organisation of categories 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 marginalising 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 these activities include not merely reproduction, 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). Thus, 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 empirical situations of disparity on all social levels of a society, 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). The linking of the concept of gender relations to international usage was justified by 'ethnographical diversity'; meant by 'the gender relation' was a cultural order as an expression of structure (social fabric, symbols). 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 [*Konnexionen*]' (40). Following **Beer** (1990), they 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 gendered division of labour and a masculine politics were supposed to sustain the complementary idea 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. – In 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 the approach of 'itemising all of the motivations and causes' persisted, 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 interconnections.

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' (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, inasmuch 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 subjective analysis. All of these aspects require clarification.

The development and capitalist utilisation of gene technology, intervening in human reproduction, has now moved the boundaries between the production of life and goods so decisively, however, 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 continuation 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; fertilisation, 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 housewife, 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. Within 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 haggled over 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 (1970) regarded test-tube babies to be an indispensable revolution, because she thought the oppression of women as biologically determined. Donna Haraway proposed, in a fiercely contested manifesto, to infiltrate

gene technology with socialist-feminist principles, and argued for 'pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction' (1984/2004, 8). 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' (11). 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' (13). 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 neoliberal 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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Translated by Peter Thomas

Anthropology, Labour, Family Work/Domestic Labour, Women's Labour, Women's Movement, Women's Question, Free Love, Spirit, Community, Gender Mainstreaming, Gene Technology, Total Labour, History, Gender, Gender Contract, Gender Democracy, Gender Egalitarian Societies, Healthy/Sick, Equality, Equal Opportunities Politics, Domestic Mode of Production, Domestic Labour Debate, Housewife, Domination, Classes, Body, Matriarchy, Mother, Patriarchy, Periodisation of History, Private/Public, Relations of Production, Mode of Production, Forces of Production, Rights, Reproductive Labour, Relations of Reproduction, Reproductive Rights, Revolution, Sexuality, Subsistence, Suffragettes, Exchange, Theory of Social Development, Non-Contemporaneity, Ordinary Community, Kinship, Precapitalist Modes of Production.

Anthropologie, Arbeit, Familienarbeit/Hausarbeit, Frauenarbeit, Frauenbewegung, Frauenfrage, freie Liebe, Geist, Gemeinwesen, Gender Mainstreaming, Gentechnologie, Gesamtarbeit, Geschichte, Geschlecht, Geschlechtervertrag, Geschlechterdemokratie, geschlechtsegalitäre Gesellschaften, gesund/krank, Gleichheit, Gleichstellungspolitik, häusliche Produk-