

exchange of property between men. This is true both of antiquity and of most of the feudal era. Women have been a symbol of power or status in many forms of patriarchy; the more so the more developed the exchange of women as objects in male hands. In this sense, 'women' were the product of male discourse.

in feudalism
But here, women were only one of many objects. As exchange developed, it was not extended *between* men and women; on the contrary, women were one extension, one expression, of men's status: man's property A = property B, or property C, or woman D. Furthermore, these expressions were seldom substitutable elements of a series. In many societies with no monetary exchange or only partially developed money-functions (such as value-measure), the marriage system is a highly developed, ritualized pattern. The modern concept of exchange does not fit. There may be a traffic in women, but the idea of the economic as apart from the social is usually absent in these societies, and for good reason, since the commodity-form of dependency is virtually non-existent.

In the Middle Ages, capitalism in the form of money-capital transcended personal dependencies – but unequally so, because capitalism arose in a patriarchal society in which males, generally, were the ones who had the access to exchange and the rights of monetary property. A woman was a dependant of a lord, later of a man, and finally dependent on a man's exchange. In some cases she was herself part of it. It is two hundred years since the last recorded sale of a woman on a cow-mart in England. Though most women were exchanged in ritualized marriage arrangements, they were objects in male hands, and more or less directly one of many commodities in their exchange. It is the development of the latter which determines the character of femininity; the female as a measure of value depends primarily on the general development of value in society.

But a separate gender-value system also presupposes some degree of free and individual interaction between the sexes. As long as there is only an exchange of women, it is conceived as an exchange between persons whose maleness is presupposed and therefore irrelevant for the transaction itself. This is one reason why the idea of two complementary genders, as opposed to the

person and his property, is comparatively recent in European history. Even most of our modern words for gender, like the German Herr and Frau, have their etymological roots in relations that do not specify sex.

owned by (male)
The extended form in which women are one of many ~~male~~ commodities implies a total form in which many ~~male~~ commodities express themselves in one: women. But this implication is not realized until two conditions are fulfilled; namely, general exchangeability of male property, labour power included, through wage labour – and a separation of the gender system as a particular type of exchange.

As men's property became monetarized and generally exchangeable, each woman became dependent not on a man, but on his general power of exchange, his money. Through him, she was connected with the enormous series of monetary commodities, and indirectly money. As the affairs of the master changed, so did the ascribed nature of the slave, and even more important: so did the mode of ascription.

The construction of femininity depends both on the substitutability of men's property and on the substitutability of females. In the total value form of the gender system both of these conditions are realized, but so is women's side of the extension, and a whole lot of other phenomena that distort the picture.

Gender as a particular social relation
fx the Iliad
The extension of a separate gender exchange

In the extended form, the individual woman is one expression of men's value; the character of this value depends on the general development of exchange in society. But *female sex* as a standard equivalent of men's value depends also on the exchange of women. It depends on an extended exchange where the man has individual freedom of choice and therefore, potentially or actually, expresses his value in a series of women.

Each expression is an individual person and by itself an elementary relation. But the total expression is no longer individual. The series, originally A (male) = B (female), or = C (female) and so on, is transformed owing to changes on the man's side of the

relation. As women are no longer individual dependants but rather dependent on what is ultimately the same, money, their individual difference is already implicitly negated, and it is this negation – women as a class – which is spelled out backwards within the gender extension. The moneyed identity of male offers is expressed as a natural identity of women.

In Marx's scheme, the extended form of the equivalent is 'defect', because it only offers disparate expressions of value; value is expressed only in a conglomerate of use values. But within the gender extension this is not the case. The commodities do have a common property, quite distinct from the labour contained in them and their own living activity and therefore something which can express value separately – their female sex.

The man's value is thereby expressed in a *standard* equivalent, no longer as individuals B, C or D but as the female sex of B, C or D. As far as the women's options are restricted, the positions in the exchange are quite obviously asymmetrical and cannot be turned around. *He* is not defined as specifically male by this relation – rather *they* are defined as female by serving his value as a form of expression. Accordingly, women become 'the sex'.

Monetarized commodities in the gender system

The ultimate content of an asymmetrically structured exchange is exploitation, getting something for nothing. Here, we will only consider the circulation aspect; how the admission to monetary commodities recreates the extended exchange relation within the gender system. Our initial abstraction of 'gender use value' no longer suffices. We may define two broad classes of gender commodities, objects which are convertible into the monetary system and objects which are not. Money is the primary example of the first category – money can both signify gender and also easily cross the barriers of the system. The same goes for monetarized commodities, and more to the point, monetarized labour power. If we take Marx literally, the latter does not exist in any useful way outside wage-work itself, so it seems that the man by being attractive in terms of his job gets quite a good deal from the outset.

The monetary commodities which count as gender use value within the system are already engaged outside it. They are already, at least potentially, active members of a larger exchange system where the possibilities of exchange – either directly in the case of money or indirectly in the case of monetary commodities – are infinite. The non-monetary gender commodity, on the other hand, is restricted to the exchange within the system. It tends to be placed in the equivalent position unless the type of gender interaction specifically prevents it.

Moreover, this is a vicious circle. The gender system recreates quite different conditions of labour for persons of the two sexes and thereby different access to monetary goods – and it does so precisely because it is a mode of interaction in which the relative and equivalent positions are presupposed. There would be no gender attraction or repulsion without them.

Gender as female

Exchange of women and the gender system as one part of men's exchanges corresponds to the frame element where gender means female, and, like the value form itself, this element is usually an implicit background of others.

Within the gender system, the notion of gender as something female first appears as a disproportion on the dual surface of the exchange. The male knows his value in the rest of society, but in this field things seem to be turned upside down. In the marriage market, the deal between the two appears as an exchange of rights to the male and his property, for rights to the female. The exchange, therefore, appears both as a symmetrical relation in which rights to the male correspond to rights to the female – but also as an asymmetrical relation where his status or money is exchanged for rights to the female body and self. In the latter relation, 'gender' appears as the special prerogative of women. Within each dyad, the relation usually appears in sexual terms; if not otherwise compensated, the woman gains less than the man – 'sexual favours' being something more female than male.

Secondly, gender as female appears outside the gender system,

in wage-work, education, administration, etc. and now often as a negative use value. Gender is conceived as useless in most wage-work, and as women's affairs; gender relations are conceived as a disturbance of monetary rationality and a property of women.

Thirdly, it appears as a positive use value in monetary circulation – in a curious inversion of the second role. The female body is on display in advertising, and in many kinds of circulation-related jobs, as a kind of informal human money.

Lastly, female gender appears as a monetary commodity in the shape of the prostitute and the porno model. This, too, is an inversion – here she is no longer 'money', rather she is something to be bought for money, live or in the inflated paper version of the porno industry.

In all these cases, gender as female is a consequence of the non-gender on the other side of the exchange. When 'male' is dissolved in money or monetarized labour, 'woman' congeals in a sex object, which is evaluated differently according to the context. Paradoxically, the gender system in one respect shows more of its true character when it transcends into the monetary system than it does on its own. By positing gender as female in the monetary world, it reveals a basically asymmetric form of extended exchange – a form which, inside the system, seems to be nothing more than one side of the gender duality.

But here, too, things are turned upside down, because it appears as if being female conferred a special power of conversion of value. It is even conceived as if gender favoured her specially, since she has goods to sell, a power to attract commodities, or at least an ability to make their owners exchange them which he does not have. But these are fake conversions. Women are in this case admitted into the monetary system not through degenderization, quite the contrary. The commodity of the prostitute is exchanged for money only as a sex object. Rather than a conversion into other forms of value, prostitution and pornography are the extension of the gender system into the world of money.

Gender as total system of exchange

The modern gender system is an exchange not only *of*, but *with* women as well. This double quality is the key both to the operation of the system and to the question of why it has emerged as a separate form of exchange.

In the total form of the gender system, symmetry seems to be restored, as *both* men's and women's value are expressed in a series of the other sex, and both have the same formal right of monetary exchange.

The nuclear family type seems to be a very early product of monetary relations in Europe, and is probably related to individual rights of property and inheritance among men. It is the content more than the form of the family system which changes in the first stage, when female sex as general standard is still mostly implicit, hidden within particularistic relations.

As women won subject status in the monetary economy, marriage and gender arrangements were transformed too. The right to divorce, contraceptives, unrestrained mobility and control over their own bodies were women's victories and also conditions of the emergence of the gender system as a real sphere of circulation.

The extended exchange, with women as equivalents of male value, were complemented by the opposite extension – if A's measure of value is females, then B's measure is A, and others like A – males. Women have the formal and to some extent also the real freedom of choice. By implication, she is free, also, to abstain from any immediate arrangement, to be on her own.

The total exchange creates competition, the rating aspect, as a prominent and regular feature of the gender system. Patriarchal dependencies are realized as gender relations of subordination, as women become the medium of relationships between males. A harsh oppression of 'gay' people as well as a massive indoctrination of femininity preceded the realization of gender as a total form of exchange in the west.

As a total system, the gender exchange became institutionalized in the various versions of the gender market and in the new temporary gender contract (Holter 1981). Gender relations

changed the quality of public life, western culture became 'sexualized'. But throughout this new aspect of the social world, gender appeared as a system of complementarity, 'equal but different', and although part of a highly commercialized culture, it appeared as its very opposite: the world of love as opposed to the world of money.

The total gender form is not universal, since it borders on a monetary form of value into which it cannot develop. We have seen why reproductive labour cannot become wage labour. And in an exchange where the commodities on *both* sides are inseparable from the living person and where, further, each person counts as a free subject, there is no possibility of any commodity developing into money. This does not preclude the formation of a sex-object which serves as standard value-measure, but the monetary functions remains ideal.

Gender as a total form of value corresponds to a dual notion of gender, different from the older dyadic notion of man and women. Here, men and women appear as two classes, different but equal, and each individual emerges as a representative of this larger duality.

The standard dyad as a whole

We have come full circle to our initial relation –

male A = female B.

The standard dyad appeared individually as an elementary relation $A = B$. Now, it emerges as the basic cell of a larger exchange pattern, a pattern which it hides and distorts while simultaneously effectuating it. The dyad and its individual element is real, but through its reality quite different relations are hidden.

The three strands of the weave – elementary, extended, total – are intertwined in the dyad and their relative prominence shifts according to the phase of gender interaction. The total form is pronounced in the marriage market, the elementary in marriage. Such changes produce shifts in the totality of the dyad which are

best represented by the strange leaps and twists of the extended form – frames where female means being a money-object coexist beautifully with frames of women being bought for money, and so on.

Seen from the point of view of the dyad, the extended exchange – as in the marriage market – appears only as the natural differentiation of the sexes; although each individual is anonymized and placed in one camp or the other, the process seems fully symmetrical. Moreover, the gap is only temporary and bridged by the dyad itself, now presenting its charming individual nature.

But its practical results seldom conform to its image. These results, which include misery, inequality, violence and isolation are perhaps no surprise considered by themselves, but nevertheless quite amazing when one considers the sheer mass of good intentions which paves the way here.

Gender as such

The notion of gender as such, though implicit in all other gender categories, is established socially through the formation of the standard dyad of man and woman within the context of the modern gender system combining the three forms of value.

The dyad is formed, as in any other case of exchange, in accordance with the rule of 'quid pro quo': something for something else. Now, everybody represents something else to somebody else, and as far as the ideal of bourgeois private individuality goes, this should be all there is to it. But in the total gender system, there is nothing 'else' except the one or the other gender, as individuals appear in terms of sexual attraction.

However, the commodities, whose economic bill of entrance into the dyad was their sex *difference*, are placed as socially *identical* inside it. And this identity seems to be a matter of sex too, since the sex quality was what brought them there in the first place. The notion of gender as something in general, as such, stems from this peculiar transformation of natural difference into a purely social identity. Though naturally sex is what makes people differ, here, socially, it seems to be what makes them alike. They are related by

their common property of being 'as sex'. But sex now negates precisely what the sexes are, namely a natural difference. It is posed as something which is common and purely social – *gender*.

The actual exchange leads to the realization of the use values exchanged, which are now available for immediate use. And thereby the use values which formed the motive of the exchange are realized too. Gender roles and identities are reconstructed, or rather re-valorized, in terms of proofs brought about by this immediate use, in a curious daily-life empiricism. Sexuality as such is the logical exponent of gender as such, and therefore the standard money-of-account within the dyad.

Sexuality appears as the central aspect of gender, since the specific use values of the value form are realized here. Acts become 'sexual' – as opposed to erotic – as far as they are able to involve these use values and also their specific economic position vis-à-vis each other. Intercourse, he expressing himself in her, becomes the core also of a sexuality which is no longer tied to procreation. Since the quality of the value form is thereby recreated, it seems as if sex involved its quantity as well. Sexuality continually reproduces the illusion that the gender positions are somehow *created* here.

The genders as relative and equivalent forms of value

The genesis of heterosexual monogamy requires a historical analysis. Still, the basic aspect of these rules corresponds to the wage-labour relationship. The polarity of producer and reproducer is recreated through heterosexuality – and the individual character of wage-work corresponds to the dyadic, one-to-one character of monogamy. Marx compared the positions of relative and equivalent to the two poles of a magnet; and if these positions are the core of the gender system, a continuous recreation of heterosexual attraction and homosexual repulsion will dominate the system.

We have analysed two very different forms of reification, one where the female becomes a measure of value, and another which restricts the first and makes each gender the equivalent of the other. Therefore, masculinity as relative and femininity as equivalent

positions emerge as stable tendencies underneath the dual level, seldom as absolutes. Maleness, in de Beauvoir's view, is 'transcendence'; in Parsons', 'instrumentality'. Both are present in the relative position. Transcendence is implied in the ability to use the 'immanent' other as an 'expressive' instrument of one's own value. And unlike Parsons and de Beauvoir, these phenomena are now outlined in terms of value, regardless of use values.

The equivalent, in Marx's words, is 'a body in which we see nothing but value'. But the value-characteristics seem to arise from the natural body itself, from the use values which occupy this position – the more so the more restricted their possibilities of conversion to other forms of exchange. From this position, the world emerges as a gender world. For the male, on the other hand, gender appears from the relative position, and therefore as a minor, natural matter in a greater gender-neutral world. The views complement each other.

The equivalent is the expression of the relative position. But it appears the other way round, as if the relative position is determined by the equivalent; as if female defines male; as if the man has to be male because she is female.

In reality the equivalent, in Marx's words, 'is passive' and 'takes no initiatives' because the initiative is already taken by the other commodity. It is 'in a relation because something else relates to it'. It is defined as equivalent not due to its own wishes or actions, but because it is placed as such.

In sum, 'its function is merely to serve' (Marx 1970, p. 58). Women's servitude in the circulation sphere of gender as equivalents is only the initial step in the process of reproduction, and the inverted expression of the *active* servitude in the labour process.

Conclusion

Through marxist value analysis, I have traced some of the basic patterns of the gender system and their implications for the gender identity matrix of capitalism.

My point of departure is the wage-labour relationship and its

implied relation to non-wage labour. The analysis concerns the expressions of this relation in the sphere of circulation: the gender system. The elementary, extended, and total forms of exchange and their combination within the gender system are outlined – together with the correspondent notions of gender as individual, as female, as dual, and as universal. Finally, male and female gender identity is traced to the relative and equivalent positions of the exchange.

The gender model presented here may be visualized as a double helix of exchange, a double spiral which distributes and regulates the labour in the core of the helix. Both arms of the spiral – exchange of women and exchange with women – are by themselves quite different from the combination; the first is no *gender* exchange, the second no *exchange*. Their combination creates the modern gender system. This is hard to see, however, because the arms are connected by singular relations which seem to create the individual through the sexual.

A marxist theory of women's oppression, to which the present essay is a small contribution, requires a thorough critique of the patriarchal traditions of marxism, where the analysis is closed to women's main labour and its economic forms. On the other hand, a women's theory of oppression requires a critique of gender. For both, it is a question of breaking the frame.

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10. Theoretical Ambiguities – a Reflection of Women's Lives?

Introduction

The women's liberation movement in Norway has in the 1980s developed from a few organizations to a great number of smaller fora working on more limited women's political issues.¹ This change in the women's liberation movement is not primarily a change from activity to passivity, but one from the concentrated efforts represented by the organizations to the dispersion represented by the multiple fora. The shift is from the search for political totality to the focusing on special subjects, from visions of political revolution to a more reformist, frequently occupationally based, resistance.

This development can be explained partly by factors outside the women's movement itself. Norway is a society with strong reformist traditions. This gives participants in a movement searching for totality a constant push towards pressure group activities.² But what is it *within* the women's movement itself that has made the changes possible? What internal factors have contributed to the loss of terrain on the part of the organizations searching for political totality?

It is my contention that one of the important factors is the marxism-feminism debates within and between the organizations. In Norway such debates had an organizational form of expression. For a couple of years – up till 1973 – marxists were organized in one organization and feminists in another. Everybody active in the women's liberation movement was more or less forced to take a stand in these debates and to participate in the development of a

- 4 These examples are chosen just for contrasting the analytical statements. I have not taken a stand on the validity of their historical interpretation.
- 5 That Oakley regards these as important aspects is also shown in one of her later analyses (Oakley 1981, chapter 9).
- 6 According to Oakley, the maternal instinct did not exist as an idea until after the Second World War.
- 7 In a later published article on the traditional magazines for women, Arnfred goes further into this division and shows how it hides the class-anatagonism between women, and hides the link between paid work, consumption, and freetime and family.
- 8 Arnfred modifies this main claim, stating that in the family there is not only men's domination over women, but also men's domination over younger men.
- 9 Also in later published works Delphy (1980 and 1981) goes further into these viewpoints referred to by me.
- 10 In the concept 'unmarried children' Delphy includes *adult* sons and daughters.
- 11 By 'productive work' Delphy probably means all kinds of work listed in the GNP (gross national product).
- 12 Eeg-Henriksen and Baadshaug (1976) emphasize that girls are educated for the reserve army; either directly by the educations functioning as storing places, or indirectly by the fact that some typical female educations give very bad possibilities for paid work.
- 13 The analyses of Arnfred and Delphy are basically different, although both stress the patriarchy in the family. The analysis of Delphy is not concerned with the division between unpaid work in the family and paid work, but with two modes of production functioning side by side in our society.
- 14 This way of thinking is based on a liberal philosophic tradition, in the way that workers are supposed to face a 'pure' market. This excludes how the social organizing, for example trade unions, intervenes in the relationship between market and workers, and limits the pure logic of market mechanisms.
- 15 Also Boman (1980) shows this. She claims that Marx's analyses of capitalism contain this contradiction, because Marx was not able to take analytical account of the fact that the working-class family had vanished as *economic* unit.

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