DIOGENES

Diogenes 225: 163–167
ISSN 0392-1921

Abstracts

Joan W. Scott
Gender: Still a Useful Category of Analysis?

This paper traces the history of uses of the word "gender". It suggests that though "gender" has been recuperated and become commonplace, many issues persist around the way "women" and "men", and the power relations between them, are defined and are evolving. Provided it still allows us to question the meanings attached to the sexes, how they are established and in what contexts, gender remains a useful, because critical, analytical category.

Tanella Boni
Wounded Bodies, Recovered Bodies?
Discourses around female sexual mutilation

This study reviews various discourses around female sexual mutilation from the perspective of the human and social sciences, and also current debates between supporters of the cultural argument and those defending the universality of human rights. An aside about the Dogon myth of world order recorded by Marcel Griaule in *Dieu d'eau* or Aristotle's philosophical discourse in the *Reproduction of Animals* is required in order to widen the debate and see its importance as regards the dignity of the human person. In Aristotle woman is a freak accident, she interrupts the circle that goes from man to man so that he can start off again. Woman is a "catastrophe" necessary to the exercise of the male genitalia; her body is naturally mutilated and incomplete. In the Dogon myth the clitoris rises up like a termite-hill, it is oversized and must be knocked down, that is, excised. Between excessive size, monstrousness and ugliness come discourses which have since time immemorial accompanied and justified wounding the female genitals. But today a medical type of discourse, which is widely accepted, is aiming to repair excised genitalia and give back to women the happiness of a recovered body. Thus we may ask what "woman's dignity" consists of and whether it is the same as the "dignity of the human person".

Copyright © ICPHS 2010
SAGE: Los Angeles, London, New Delhi and Singapore, http://dio.sagepub.com
DOI: 10.1177/0392192110369452

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192110369452 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Madeline H. Caviness
Feminism, Gender Studies, and Medieval Studies

This article traces the multiple and rapid changes that have occurred during the past fifteen years, in theorizing "sex/gender arrangements". A secondary aspect is the reception, application and above all modification of these theories by some scholars of European medieval cultural production, in which varieties of difference are found that do not apply in modern societies. Deconstruction of the binary m/f (whether thought of as sexual or gender difference) erupted among feminist thinkers in the 1990s and eventually "queered" academic discourses by destabilizing labels that had been naturalized, including a consistent gender identity for the individual in medieval or modern society. The author claims that queer and post-colonial theory, far from being antithetical to feminist theory, are out-growths of it, and exist in parallel; the proponents of each are concerned with the societal forces, including our own discourses, that maintain difference, and create communities of oppression Yet it is also necessary to raise the question, when will the next radical departure occur, and how will new theories be generated?

Moha Ennaji
Multiculturalism, Gender and Political Participation in Morocco

The multiculturalism and multilingualism typical of Moroccan society not only act as a backdrop to women's participation in the public and political arena, but also provide a grid to analyse it. Upper-class women, whose level of education contrasted with very widespread illiteracy among the female population, were responsible for the birth of the modern feminist movement in Morocco in the 1940s. The heirs to historical figures who were prominent in building the nation, they fired the starting gun for women's emancipation. Moroccan women have struggled against colonialism and contributed to the progress of society. Their participation in politics is still limited mainly because of conservative ideas that stand in the way of their entry into political life.

All in all women's emancipation in Morocco has advanced since independence. Because of their fight women's associations, and democratic forces in general, succeeded in bringing about reform of the Mudawana (family code) in 2004. However the choice between modernity and tradition remains a big challenge.

Sirma Bilge
Recent Feminist Outlooks on Intersectionality

With its recognition of the combined effects of the social categories of race, class and gender intersectionality has risen to the rank of feminism's most important contribution to date. Though the first intersectional research (American and British) gave visibility to the social locus of women who self-identified as "black" or "of colour", current research goes beyond the confines of the English-speaking world and aims

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192110369452 Published online by Cambridge University Press

increasingly to develop an intersectional *instrument* to deal with discrimination. This project gives rise to two kinds of debate: one related to producing intersectional information and to ways of carrying out research in this area, the other to do with the use of this information in the political struggle for equality. The current paper, which is confined to the first debate, attempts to bring out the main tension points in present theorizations of intersectionality. Its objective is twofold: to demonstrate certain limits to the explanatory power of intersectionality, and to suggest ways forward in the light of discussions already in train. In order to do so four points are tackled: intersectionality as a research paradigm, the issue of levels of analysis, the theoretical difference of opinion on the ontological status of categories of difference and the issue of widening the theoretical scope of intersectionality.

Boutheina Cheriet
The Ambiguous State: Gender and Citizenship as Barter in Algeria

This essay proposes a re-reading of the process of establishing the post-colonial nation-state in Algeria, and of the dynamics of citizenship in the light of gender, in order to illuminate the hesitations of the political class as to the meaning of the principle of universal emancipation and sexual equality in the private sphere of personal status.

Whereas up to now readings studying the nature of the Algerian political regime and its ideological discourse have been solely concerned with denouncing the "moribund" character of modernism and/or "Algerian-style" socialism, the argument will deal mainly with the private domestic sphere in order to expose ideological references and representations that are decidedly traditionalist, if not archaic, as regards gender relations in the Algerian family, idealized by the legislation underlying the Family Code (1984/2005).

Finally a detailed review, based on an analysis by gender, of the minutes of parliamentary debates in the legislatures from 1982 to 1984 will demonstrate the highly patriarchal nature of the cultural representations of Algeria's decision-makers, who are reluctant to extend "modernization" to the female population.

Francoise Collin
Between Poiesis and Praxis: Women and Art

If we think of artistic creation as a basic dimension of humanity we need to question the absence of female artists in history. We should also look at their gradual emergence in the late 20th century, an emergence that coincides with the feminist movement and a change in the conception of art itself, revealed chiefly by Duchamp.

But does art by women have some specificity? Without giving a definite answer as far as subject matter is concerned, we note that the conditions suited to both history and the history of art may affect their creation but without specifying it ontologically. If, moreover, some women artists define their work as feminist, it is through an act that combines artistic and political transgression.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192110369452 Published online by Cambridge University Press

The exhibition currently arranged by the Georges Pompidou Centre, *elles@ beaubourg*, provides new resources for these complex questions.

Morny Joy
The Impact of Gender on Religious Studies

The theme of gender in religion has not been dealt with homogenously given the many research areas that feed into the discipline of religious studies. This paper reviews the different uses of "gender" over the last 20 years. It notes that, though there is no single definition of the word, "gender" as a term has had a very great impact on the way women have formulated their demand for equality of treatment and renegotiated or even raised new claims as regards their integrity and identity.

Genevieve Sellier
Gender Studies and Film Studies: French Advances and Resistances

Fifteen years after the first translations of Anglo-American feminist film theories, this gender approach is finding it hard to gain acceptance in France. The main reason is the elitist view of *cinema d'auteur* that is still prevalent in academic circles, where the art is seen as a genius's creation outside social determinations in general and gender relations in particular.

However, under the influence of historians and sociologists, who dominate gender research in France, French work on film privileges a historical and sociocultural approach, whereas American research is dominated by psychoanalytical approaches. French gender analyses privilege the expression of dominant relations but also of contradictions at work in the films, whether popular or by an *auteur-e*, as well as in the stars' image or in tv fiction. Finally some research explores the changes brought about by the emergence of female film-makers on the French scene.

Thierry Hoquet
Is Sociobiology Amendable? Feminist and Darwinian women biologists confront the paradigm of sexual selection

Is it possible to be a socio-biologist and a feminist? Socio-biology has been accused of being a macho ideological arsenal, which seems to exclude in advance any possibility of amending it. However that was the project of several female researchers (in particular S. B. Hrdy and P. A. Gowaty), who suggested adopting the science's theoretical framework in order to change it from within. This has been expressed in a change of focus: an appeal to take account of female strategies and their evolution as well as the "sex war" at work in process of reproduction. This opening out of socio-biology's theoretical framework has not been undertaken in the name of the privilege of a "female perspective" but it has without a doubt been nourished by the researchers' marginal position in their discipline as well as their political involve-

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192110369452 Published online by Cambridge University Press

ment. "Male" contributions, such as W. G. Eberhard's work on the "female's cryptic choice", are also part of this movement though they do not claim allegiance to it. Similarly, a critical study has been carried out on the vocabulary of socio-biology: not in order to exercise a "politically correct" ideological tyranny but to improve the efficiency of the conceptual tools introduced by the science. Today some feminists think feminism should incorporate socio-biology's results but resistance still remains strong. Though many feminists think feminism has more to bring to biology than the reverse, many biologists consider that feminism is just an ideology that should remain apart from scientific work.

Susanne Lettow
The Bio-technosciences in Philosophy:
Challenges and prospects for gender studies

Since the 1960s the bio/technosciences have occupied a central place in philosophical thinking. The paper sets out three theoretical configurations embodying major challenges for today's gender studies in philosophy, since they raise an obstacle, each in its own way, to the discussion on implications of the bio/technosciences in the political field and the area of gender theory: firstly naturalism in the field of the philosophy of science; secondly the paradigm of applied ethics; and thirdly the discourse of philosophical anthropology that has been reactivated in philosophical debates about the bio/technosciences. To conclude, some of the future tasks will be mentioned which fall to gender studies in philosophy.

Patrick Cardon
Post-Queer. In Defense of a "Trans-Gender Approach"
or Trans-Gender as an Analytical Category

The notion of gender, introduced into France by queens and drags in the late 20th century (the glorious period of the "drag-queens") and revitalized by American "queer", follows a traditionally feminist path where homosexual and particularly male issues are once again being hidden away. Having played a big part in popularizing that first version, Patrick Cardon proposes, in order to avoid any misunderstanding and escape once for all from any attempts at reification, to use the term and the universal notion of transgender, which would cover the deconstructivist notions of queer, post-colonial and cultural studies, in order to give a place intelligently to ALL diversities beyond any binarism and with a foresight of future hybridity.

https://doi.org/10.1177/0392192110369452 Published online by Cambridge University Press