EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE, FLORENCE

EUROPEAN CULTURE RESEARCH CENTRE

EUI WORKING PAPER No. 89/396

Challenging Dichotomies: Theoretical and Historical Perspectives on Women's Studies in the Humanities and Social Sciences

GISELA BOCK

BADIA FIESOLANA, SAN DOMENICO (FI)

Printed in Italy in June 1989
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
– 50016 San Domenico (FI) –
Italy

CHALLENGING DICHOTOMIES: THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES ON WOMEN'S STUDIES IN THE HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (*)

Gisela Bock

Women's studies have come a long way. Precisely twenty years ago, the American historian Gerda Lerner wrote that "the striking fact about the historiography of women is the general neglect of the subject by historians". At that time, women as a subject were not only "hidden from history" (1), but also hidden from the other humanities and social sciences. Scholarship was far from "objective" or "universal". Because it was based on male experience, placing men at the centre and as a measure of all things human, it left out half of humankind. In the past two decades, however, the situation has considerably changed. In an enormous (and enormously growing) body of scholarship women have been rendered visible. They have been placed at the centre and what women do, have to do, want to do has been re-evaluated. It has been re-evaluated in view of social, political and cultural change, of an improvement in women's situations and, more generally, in terms of a change

towards more freedom and justice. But what was it, more precisely, that has been rendered visible by making women a subject of research? In a first step, it was their subjection, in a second step it was their subjectivity - because women are not only victims, but they also actively shape their own lives and society.

Much of this research was carried out in the context of three theoretical frameworks used by many feminist scholars in the past two decades and which I will outline in the first section of this paper. These frameworks point to three dichotomies in traditional thought on gender relations, and all of them have been profoundly challenged in recent studies. In a second section, I will illustrate three dichotomies which are more recent and which presently dominate women's studies. These more recent dichotomies would seem to indicate future research strategies. All of them have been discussed, to a greater or lesser degree, internationally, but we also find some interesting national differences in the debates and in their sequence over time. Particularly noteworthy are certain changes in language brought about by women's studies. These are, of course, nationally different, but they also show to what extent women's studies have succeeded in crossing national boundaries.

I. Women as subject, the subjection of women and women's subjectivity.

(1) Nature vs. culture. It was mainly in the United States in the early 1970s that the relation of the sexes was discussed in terms of the relation, or rather dichotomy, between "nature and nurture" or "nature and culture". Men and their activities had been seen as culture and of cultural value, whereas women and their activities had been seen as natural, outside of history and society, always the same and therefore not worthy of scholarly, political or theoretical interest. Moreover, it was relations between the sexes, and most particularly their relations of power and subjection, that had been attributed to nature. "Nature", in this context, most often meant sexuality between men and women and women's capacity for pregnancy and motherhood. Fatherhood, however, was seen not as "natural" but as "social". Female scholars, particularly philosophers, historians and anthropologists, challenged this traditional dichotomy. They argued that what "nature" really meant in this discourse was a devaluation of everything that women stood for (2), that "'nature' always has a social meaning" (3), that both "nature" and "culture" meant different things at different times, in different places and to the different sexes and that women's body and bodily capacities were not always and everywhere seen as disabilities, but also as a basis for certain kinds of informal power and public activities. (4) The nature/culture dichotomy was recognized as a specific and perhaps specifically Western way of expressing the hierarchy between the sexes. One of the

linguistic results in women's studies is that the term "nature" is now almost always placed in quotation marks.

The study of women's identification with nature, of their bodily functions and activities such as motherhood, nursing and caring, has resulted in a number of important works which deal with these distinctively female domains. Early works on the history of mothers were written by French scholars. More recently, research on the female body has shown to what degree it is historically conditioned and dependent on the cultural context. (5) Feminist philosophers, particularly in France (such as Luce Irigaray), are building their theoretical framework precisely around such distinctive female experience, and this approach currently finds great and controversial interest in the United States. (6) On the other hand, French historians argue that this focus on women's "nature" is counterproductive because it seems to confirm traditional stereotypes which see women as being exclusively defined by their body, by motherhood and by their sex, and to overlook the more important political dimension of women's history. (7)

(2) Paid vs. unpaid work. A second theoretical framework for rendering women visible and for dismantling their identification with the merely natural, unchanging and therefore uninteresting, was the issue of their distinctive work. It had its origins more in the European than in the American context, particularly in Italy, Britain, Germany and France. What had been seen as nature was now seen as

work: bearing, rearing and caring for children, looking after the breadwinner-husband and after other family members. To call this activity "work" meant to challenge dichotomies such as "work and family", "work and leisure", "working men and supported wives", paid and unpaid work, and it meant questioning the view that work is only that which is done for pay. Women have always worked, and unpaid work was and is women's work. Obviously, men's work is valued more highly than women's work. In theoretical terms, it has been demonstrated that and why this work was overlooked by the male theoreticians of work and the economy, and now the value or "productivity" of domestic work was discussed. (8) In historical terms, it has been shown how strongly this work changed over time and cross-culturally. For example, in Britain and Australia, housewives were counted as workers in the census up to the end of the last century, when they were excluded from the working categories (at the same time, German feminists were demanding that their work be included in the measurement of the Gross National Product). (9)

The sexual division of labour is, in the first place, a sexual division of value and rewards. The lower value of women's work continues in employment outside the home where women have also always worked, but earned only 50% to 80% of men's earnings in the 19th and 20th centuries in Western countries. (10) Women's employment in the caring and nursing professions, where they are the overwhelming majority, does not guarantee them a decent survival income; the recent nurses' strike in West Germany is just one example. (11) Today's increase in the number of single

mothers has also led to a "feminization of poverty", even beyond the traditionally high level of female poverty. (12)

The apparent dichotomy between "work and family", between men as workers and women as "non"-workers, turns out to be one between superior and inferior value. The women's studies' challenge of this paradox is contemporary to political challenges to pay women's as yet unpaid work, to raise their earnings in low-pay jobs, and to admit women to well-paid professions. This challenge has also led to a linguistic change. Even though, in the English language, the terms "working women" and "working mothers" are still reserved for employed women only, the terms "work and family" are now often substituted by "paid and unpaid work". In German, for instance, women's studies distinguish consistently between "work" and "employment", "Arbeit" and "Erwerbstätigkeit".

(3) Public vs. private. A third conceptual framework of women's studies has been the relation between the public and the private, or the political and the personal, or the sphere of power and the domestic sphere. Traditional political theory has seen them, again, as a dichotomy of mutually exclusive terms, identified with women's "sphere" and men's "world". Women's studies have profoundly challenged this view, pointing out its inadequacy for understanding politics and society. (13) The slogan, "the personal is political", indicated that the issue of power is not confined to "big politics", but also appears in sexual relations. Men inhabit, and rule within, both spheres,

whereas women's proper place was seen to be only in the domestic sphere and in her subjection to father or husband. This means, on the one hand, that the dichotomy is not one between two autonomous, symmetrical and equivalent spheres, but rather a complex relation between domination and subordination, between power and powerlessness. (14) On the other hand, women's studies have shown that the public "world" was essentially based on the domestic "sphere". Male workers, male politicians and male scholars perform their tasks only because they are born, reared and cared for by women's labour. The boundaries between public and private shift significantly over time and cross-culturally, such as in the historical transition between private charity and public assistance, in both of which women played important roles. (15) State policy has not left women out, but has shaped their personal circumstances by public intervention such as laws about rape and abortion. The modern Welfare States have discriminated against women in old age pensions and unemployment benefits, they have introduced maternity leave for employed women without substituting their loss of income - this was changed only through the struggles of the "first wave" women's movements -, and income tax reforms have supported husbands and fathers, but not wives and mothers. (16) The Welfare State has not excluded women's sphere but included it as private, i.e. under the rule of the husband. The National Socialist State went much beyond this, because its intervention tended to destroy the private sphere; not however, as is often said, by promoting motherhood, but by promoting precisely the opposite: a policy of mass compulsory sterilization for women and men

who were considered "racially inferior". This policy was explicitly based on the doctrine that "the private is political", and it expressed "the primacy of the state in the field of life, marriage and the family". (17)

Women's studies have also discovered that what is perceived as "private" by men may be seen as "public" by women. The domestic tasks of bearing and rearing children, for instance, were proclaimed as being of public importance by many women in the earlier women's movement. They requested that it be re-evaluated, and many of them based their demand for equal political citizenship precisely on this vision of the "separate sphere", understood as a source of rights as well as responsabilities of the female sex in respect to civil society. (18) They did not so much challenge the sexual division of labour, but the sexual division of power. In this sense, the late anthropologist Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo has argued that women could, and did, challenge male rule either by seeking to enter the distinctively male sphere, or by stressing the value of their own sphere. (19) In fact, a considerable part of women's scholarship has pointed out that the traditional 19th-century or "Victorian" version of the female "separate sphere" was not oppressive in a simple way, but left considerable spaces for female bonding and the development of a "women's culture" as an expression of women's subjectivity. (20)

II. Gender equality, sexual difference and women's autonomy

The three conceptual frameworks which I have tried to summarize - nature/culture, paid/unpaid work, public/private - have shaped a large part of women's studies in the past two decades. They have done so, and will continue to do so, precisely because they challenged the dichotomy and mutual exclusiveness between their respective categories and therefore challenged the traditional assumption that these dichotomies were expressions - natural and necessary expressions - of sexual difference. But somehow ironically, the same process by which women became visible through the critique of these paradoxes has also led to a number of new dichotomies of which little or nothing was heard during the first phase of women's studies, and which came to the fore within the context of feminist scholarship itself. They are the result of past attempts to resolve the earlier paradoxes with the help of new concepts and new theoretical frameworks. These new dichotomies are "sex vs. gender", "sexual equality vs. sexual difference" and "integration vs. autonomy" of women as well as women's studies. It seems that future strategies for women's studies lie precisely, and once more, in the possibility and necessity to challenge these new dichotomies.

(1) Sex vs. gender. The concept "gender" was introduced in the 1970s as a social, cultural, political and historical category, in order to express the insight that women's subordination, inferiority and powerlessness are not dictated by nature, but are social, cultural, political and

historical constructions. Whereas "gender" had previously referred only to linguistic-grammatical constructions, it now became a major theoretical framework. (21) One of the reasons for its success in substituting the word "sex" was the insistence that the study of women does not only deal with sexuality, wifehood and motherhood, but with women in all walks of life. Women's studies do not only concern half of humankind, but all of it, because not only women are gendered beings, but also men, who are indeed far from representing universal humanity. In fact, a new discipline has emerged, namely "men's studies", the study of men as men. The concept "gender" radicalized and universalized the effort to make women visible, to the insight that gender is a basic structure of society - no less important than, for instance, class, religion or ethnicity -, and that therefore women's and gender studies concern, in principle, any field or object of the humanities and social sciences. (22)

But the new terminology has also brought to the fore major problems. They result from the fact that in the Anglo-American context, the concept gender has been introduced in the form of a dichotomy. It distinguishes categorically between gender and sex, "sex" to be understood as "biological" and "gender" as "social", and both are seen as combined in a "sex/gender system" where "raw biological sex" is somehow transformed into "social gender" (23). But this dichotomy, created by women, does not resolve but only restates the old nature vs. culture quarrel as created by men. Again, it relegates the dimension of women's body, sexuality, motherhood and physical sexual difference to a

supposedly pre-social sphere, and it resolves even less the question of precisely what part of women's experience is "biological" and what part "cultural".

Moreover, the new dichotomy differs in one important respect from the traditional one. It reduces women's embodiement no longer to a traditional nature, but to a modern "biology". Today "biology" is in current use by feminist scholars, particularly in the United States, and it refers almost always to women's body and particularly to maternity. (24) The term nature is now regularly placed in quotation marks, but not so "biology", which seems to be something self-evident. But it is, in fact, far from being self-evident because, historically and culturally, "biology" has itself been a socio-cultural category. It has come into circulation only since the turn of the century, was soon taken up by the right and the left, and meant, first of all, "inferiority". (25) Modern "biology" is as little self-evident as "nature" in traditional language, but it has probably more dangerous consequences for women's studies and women's liberation, particularly in view of today's heavy attack on nature in the natural (and especially biological) sciences.

The new feminist use of "biology" as distinct from, and opposed to, gender as a social category has made it possible for gender to be used not only as a radicalizing weapon in the intellectual debate, but also as an instrument for rendering women again invisible. Gender has lent itself to a gender-neutral discourse which implies that women and

men are members not of a "sex" but of a "gender", that they are in reality nothing else than identical "individuals" and that sex doesn't matter, because it is "biology" and therefore socially irrelevant. (26)

Feminist scholars who insist on the dichotomy "sex vs. gender" or "biology vs. culture" even though they realize these problems, often underline that they do so because this seems to be politically useful in view of new attempts to confine women to their "biological" sphere, particularly of the "deterministic biological backlash" of socio-biological anti-feminism. (27) But this seems to be merely a defensive position, not an advance. I believe that as long as intellectual insights are rejected for reasons which are dictated by anti-feminists and not by women's experience, they will not lead to intellectually and politically better results. In fact, what is called "biological determinism" is "not more of an attack on freedom than the social or economic determinism which is accepted... throughout social sciences." What is really injurious is "fatalism, the pretence that problems which are in our control lie outside it and are uncurable." (28)

Finally, the dichotomic distinction between sex and gender is specific to the English language. Attempts have been made to introduce it into other languages - "sesso vs. genere" in Italian, "sexe vs. genre" in French -, but their linguistic dynamics and connotations are very different; for instance, the English "gendered being" will continue to be an "essere sessuato" in Italian. Turkish feminist scholars

must simply use both terms in English because their own language has different ways of expressing sexual relations. In German, there is only one concept for both, the old term "Geschlecht" which refers to grammatical gender, to the sexes, to families and generations, and to race such as in "human race", "Menschengeschlecht" (29). German scholars are therefore in the both difficult and promising position not to be able to distinguish neatly, even though problematically, between physiology and culture with linguistic tools.

In this linguistic and theoretical situation, the dichotomy of sex and gender should be challenged, in the humanities and social sciences, through a procedure which has already been used fruitfully in historical research: to simply do away with the term "biology" in the sense of the female body (and other and better terms are readily at hand), to use "gender" in a comprehensive sense which includes both the physical and the cultural dimension, and to use "sex" in the same sense.

(2) Equality vs. difference. Obviously, the problems of the sex/gender dichotomy are closely related to the problems of a second dichotomy with which we are faced today in a new way and in an international debate which has taken on different shapes and phases in different countries: the dichotomy "equality vs. difference". Women's studies have largely relied on the concept of "sexual equality" as an analytical tool, and natural difference has been played down as insignificant because it had so often been used to

justify discriminatory treatment of women. This has led to a concept of gender that excludes sexual difference as "biological" and to efforts to make women visible as "persons" or "individuals" independent of their sex and essentially - sometimes even "biologically" (30) - equal to men. In this perspective, it has been demanded that women be treated in the same way as men, as if they were men, and that new laws and reforms be formulated in gender-neutral terms, thus eliminating sexual difference and rendering masculinity and femininity politically irrelevant. Other feminist scholars, however, argue that burning issues such as rape, abortion, or wife-battering cannot be dealt with adequately in gender-neutral terms; that female difference, physical as well as social, should not be erased but recognized, also in legal terms; that emphasis should be laid on a critical evaluation of men's distinctive needs and activities and that women's distinctive needs and activities should be valued (thus opening alternatives both to female inferiority and to women's assimilation to men); that female "difference" has never had a chance to develop autonomous political and cultural forms other than in social niches and in opposition to dominant culture.

The best known work using the first approach is Shulamith Firestone's The Dialectics of Sex, written in the United States at a time (1970) when the term "gender" was not yet in use. It proposed to abolish "female biology" and sexual difference, pregnancy and motherhood with the means of modern technology such as in vitro fertilisation and child rearing by others than the "biological" mother. (31)

On the other side, and equally well-known, there is Carol Gilligan's important psychological work of the 1980s on women's "different voice". It avoids recurring to "biology" and argues that women's distinctive development of moral judgment emphasizes less the values of individual rights and properties than those of care, responsability and concrete human relations; that these should not be seen as inferior to, but of equal importance to the development of men, and that they should be respected and practiced also by men.(32)

The shift of public and scholarly interest from emphasis on "equality" to an emphasis on "difference" is particularly visible and controversial in the United States.(33) But it is by no means entirely new. In the late 1960s, the issue had been raised by the women's movement and the women's studies movement. They challenged the liberal and socialist assumption that equal rights alone can bring about women's liberation. This assumption has sometimes also been seen as specific to white culture. In 1968, a black American feminist put it this way: "In black women's liberation we don't want to be equal with men, just like in black liberation we're not fighting to be equal with the white man. We're fighting for the right to be different and not be punished for it" (34). In Italy, feminist philosophy and feminism tout court are called, by feminists as well as in the daily press, "il pensiero della differenza sessuale": thinking and acting in terms of sexual difference, affirming a female subjectivity which refuses to be assimilated ("homologized") to male versions of subjectivity such as the values and rights to compete, to possess, to dominate. They

maintain that the affirmation of "difference" is not a sign of weakness and resignation, but a powerful instrument of women's liberation, and they distinguish this type of feminism from what they call "emancipationism" ("emancipazionismo"), which demands only the same rights and the same treatment with men - and therefore too little. (35) An Australian feminist philosopher has pointed out that "odd things happen to women when the assumption is made that the only alternative to the patriarchal construction of sexual difference is the ostensibly sex-neutral individual" (36). Among such "odd things" there is the argument, recently publicized by a court in the United States, that the discrimination of pregnant women when they are refused a maternity leave, is not a discrimination on the basis of sex, because many women are neither pregnant nor mothers; in other words: that motherhood has nothing to do with womanhood. Another example are the European welfare policies which grant maternity benefits on the grounds that pregnancy and childbirth are a disease in order to homologize it to the male-centred policy and experience of sickness insurance (and not recognize women and mothers in their own right).(37)

Some scholars insist on the mutually exclusive character of the relation between "equality" and "difference", and therefore on the necessity of an either/or choice. The American historian Joan Hoff-Wilson and the lawyer Wendy Williams urge for a decision to be made, particularly by "feminist leaders", between either "equality between the sexes based on prevailing masculine societal

norms" or "justice between the sexes based on a recognition of equal, but different socialized patterns of behavior." (38) The historian Joan Scott, however, considers this to be "an impossible choice", and she questions precisely the dichotomy itself. (39) I also believe that it is inacceptable, one of the reasons being that both the "difference dilemma" and the "equality dilemma" (40) are far from being sufficiently explored. Just such an exploration should be put on the agenda for future women's studies. Why is it, for instance, that "equality" and "justice" complement each other in the case of men, but should be opposed to each other in the case of women? Why is it that "difference" is only attributed to one half of humankind and not to the other? Why is it that "equality" is so intimately bound up with "fraternity" or brotherhood, but not with sisterhood, since the French Revolution but also in earlier and later political thought? (41) Again, the only way forward seems to be to challenge the dichotomy itself, and to do so by analyzing and dismantling the patriarchal or sexist construction of both equality and difference: of an equality that is merely "based on prevailing masculine societal norms" and of a female difference which is merely understood as "socialized patterns of behavior". The Italian philosopher of the "differenza sessuale", Adriana Cavarero, maintains that "different and equal is possible", if equality is not understood as "eliminating one of the two different entities in the other", if "each of the two different sides is free, and if the concept of equality radically abandons its logical foundation in the abstract, serializing universalization of the male one". (42) Carole

Pateman has laid important groundwork for the further exploration of, and challenge to, this dichotomy. She has presented a critique of the traditional construction of equality as a relation between "individuals" who are essentially of the same, masculine, sex and which excludes difference, namely women, and for a critique of the traditional construction of difference which is defined not in natural terms, but in political terms such as subordination, inferiority and powerlessness. (43)

As a historian, I would like to contribute to such efforts the added value of looking at the past and to remind of the particular value of history for comparative purposes and for understanding that we are by no means the first generation to struggle with these paradoxes. The American historian Karen Offen has recently pointed out that the "first wave" women's movement struggled with them in theory and practice, and attempted to establish a new relation between the apparently exclusive terms. This movement demanded equal political citizenship, equal access to well-paid jobs and equal recognition of the value of women's distinctive contributions where a sexual division of labour exists. It did so in the United States as well as in Europe, and on the part of radical as well as of moderate feminists. Equally important central concepts of this approach were equality, equivalence and equity: "equality despite difference" and "difference despite equality".(44) Since the 1920s, and most conspicuously in the United States and Britain, the women's movement has split along the lines of emphasis on "difference" and on "equality". (45) We are

therefore dealing here with a female heritage which needs to be both accepted and overcome since we cannot afford to remain trapped in an impossible choice.

Another historical example concerns some of the questions raised by the black woman whom I have quoted earlier, namely "whom do we want to be equal to?" and, "what is the relation between the right to be equal and the right to be different?" Women's progress towards the great goal of equal political rights during the past century has often been compared to the earlier extension of suffrage from the male propertied class to the male working class. But another comparison seems to be yet more illuminating, namely the comparison with the emancipation of groups which have been excluded from equal political and social rights in a similar way as women, but differently from the male working class: i.e. ethnic minorities, the male and female victims of racism. For instance, the concept of Jewish emancipation in 19th-century Germany, as it was formulated by non-Jewish German men, was based on an equality which excluded difference. Male Jews were accepted as citizens on equal terms <u>if</u> they gave up, at least ostensibly, their Jewishness, if they accepted assimilation to German non-Jews. Among Jews themselves, this paradox was expressed in the slogan: "You are a man (human being) in the public world, a Jew in the private home" ("Draußen ein Mensch, zuhause ein Jude"). (46) Jews had to become equal in order to be accepted as equals. Among others, it was the German Jewish women's movement at the beginning of our century that questioned this view of equality, and it often pointed to

the parallels between Jewish and female emancipation. In both respects, Jewish women insisted on the right to be equal as well as on the right to be different, as women from men and as Jews from non-Jews. (47) Later, National Socialist racism, and particularly anti-Semitism, excluded Jews not only from the right to be equal to German non-Jews, but also from the right to be different as Jews.

A third historical example refers to our specifically European heritage of political thought. There is one reason why the emphasis on sexual equality so often seems to be the only powerful weapon and strategy for women's liberation and women's studies, despite the growing awareness that it implies an assimilation to prevailing androcentric and unquestioned societal norms which not all women (and men) may want to share: the fact that, since the time of the Greek polis, democratic and socialist movements have pursued their goals under the banner of equality. This concept is therefore not only a most precious heritage of Western political thought, but also one of its most well-established and accepted concepts. There is, however, another and equally precious heritage: the idea of tolerance as it emerged from the bloody religious wars in early modern Europe. Tolerance emphasizes mutual respect, liberty and justice, which are understood as recognizing both difference and equality. One challenge to the dichotomy could and should be the idea and reality of mutual tolerance instead of mutual exclusiveness. But of course, the idea of tolerance itself will require a redefinition, just like other concepts that have been used in an apparently

gender-neutral way (traditionally, tolerance as well as equality have referred to male or male-dominated groups) and that are now being discussed in view of a new vision of gender relations.

(3) Integration vs. autonomy. Something similar may be said in regard of the problems of "integration" and "autonomy" of women's studies in respect to scholarship at large, and of women in respect to academic institutions. Despite the expansion of women's studies, and even though they are now occasionally admitted as "sub-disciplinary specialisations" (48), their impact on and integration in the academic disciplines has remained minimal, and what has been called "mainstreaming" is still far from being implemented. (Of course, there are important differences here as to countries and disciplines.) In 1987, for example, the young German author of an essay on Edith Stein, catholic philosopher of Jewish descent who was killed by the National Socialists, justified his interest in her by writing that "Edith Stein was not only an outstanding women, but also a great human being". Women, it seems, are still not worthy of interest in themselves, are not even necessarily "Menschen" unless they may be placed alongside "great men". (49) But women's studies are also able to change the study of other fields too, even though slowly and in paradoxical ways. For instance, even today historians regularly speak of "universal suffrage" for the period when women were excluded from it, such as a German working class historian in 1989. (50) Many scholars are now also using the term "universal male suffrage" - but this does no more than illuminate the

assumption that male activities are considered "universal". When instead the correct term "male suffrage" is used, it shows that a broadening awareness of women's history leads also to an awareness of men as men. But this does not yet, by itself, lead to an integration of the struggle for women's suffrage into books on history at large. It is still dealt with in a separate and segregated field of research. (51)

Clearly, women's studies need to be recognized as an integral part of scholarship at large. But such "mainstreaming" may also risk being drawn into a dynamic that makes women invisible again. There are now a number of cases where chairs in women's studies are strongly opposed, but chairs in gender studies are welcome. (52) As an institutional problem, this situation may be dealt with according to individual institutional circumstances, but the theoretical problem remains, due to the specific definition of "gender" mentioned earlier: that which excludes sexual "difference", i.e. women, by classifying it as "biological" and therefore socially irrelevant. Again, women are not considered to be an equally universal subject as are other, and male-centered subjects.

Therefore, women's studies also need autonomy from male-dominated scholarship, both in institutional and in intellectual terms, in order to develop their full potential. But "autonomy", another virtue central to the heritage of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, also needs to be redefined. (53) In practice, the difficult

question is to recognize the fine line (which is also a profound divide) between autonomy and segregation, the ghetto in which women's studies often find themselves. I do not think that the problem can be dealt with through terminological distinctions such as between women's history, feminist history, gender history or, in the terminology of the French debates: histoire des femmes, histoire féminine, histoire féministe, histoire des sexes - or history tout court. Important women-centred research has been done under all these lables. (54) I also don't think that the problem of "autonomy vs. integration" coincides with the debate pro and contra "institutionalization". Important women-centred research is being done in universities, in feminist institutions and outside male or female institutions. This research also needs to be promoted, not the least in view of popularizing women's studies outside academia, among men as well as women (such as in the schools). Those who work inside institutions must find space for independent work, and those who work outside must not end up in a ghetto.

III. Some conclusions

Challenging dichotomies seems to be a major issue on the scholarly as well as the political agenda of women's studies in the humanities and social sciences. It requires, of course, further study of the precise character not only of the opposing categories, but also of the nature of the dichotomy itself and of the form and character of the challenge. Are the above-mentioned (apparently) binary

oppositions just a few examples among many binary, antagonistic, dualistic systems of (Western) thought - and therefore share the problems of the latter - or does their gender-related character require a different kind of reflection?

As to the nature of gendered dichotomies, there is obviously a profound difference between the three which have been mentioned in the first section of this paper and the latter three. This difference reflects, among other things, the increasingly complex character of the categories under which gender relations are being seen and studied. The dichotomies nature/culture, paid/unpaid work, public/private refer to a relation between single, fixed and internally homogeneous categories, each of them referring either to women or to men. In the case of sex/gender, equality/difference, integration/autonomy, both (apparently) opposing poles refer to women as well as men, which means we are now dealing with relations between relations. Hence, women's studies and the search for new visions of gender has led us - despite, or rather, because of often profoundly different approaches - to at least one common ground: gender issues are issues which concern complex human relations, relations both between and within the sexes.

And what should be the character of the challenge? It requires a continuous work on the dismantling ("deconstructing") of the apparently given meanings of the various categories. I believe that it also implies the rejection of "either/or" solutions, in favour of "as well

as" solutions. In the case of the two latter dilemmas - equality vs. difference, integration vs. autonomy - we particularly need to challenge their mutual exclusiveness and claim "autonomy despite integration" and "integration despite autonomy", "equality despite difference" and "difference despite equality". For both dilemmas, one might object - and it has been objected - that women cannot have their cake and eat it too. But, for too long, women have only baked the cake and have had the smallest slice to eat for themselves.

(*) This paper was presented at the conference of the Nordic Research Councils, on "Strategies for Women's Studies in the Humanities", Helsinki, 28-30 May 1989. I wish to thank particularly Ida Blom, Annarita Buttafuoco and Sara Matthews Grieco for their helpful comments.

(1) Gerda Lerner, "New Approaches to the Study of Women in History" (1969), in id., The Majority Finds its Past, New York 1979, p.3; cf. Sheila Rowbotham, Hidden from History: 300 Years of Women's Oppression and the Fight against It, London 1973.

(2) Sherry Ortner, "Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?", in Michelle Z. Rosaldo and Louise Lamphere, Woman, Culture and Society, Stanford (Stanford UP) 1974, p. 72.

(3) Carole Pateman, "Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy", Feminism and Equality, ed. Anne Phillips, New York (New York UP) 1987, p. 110.

(4) See Gianna Pomata, "La storia delle donne: una questione di confine", Il mondo contemporaneo: Gli strumenti della ricerca, vol. II, ed. Giovanni de Luna et al., Florence (La Nuova Italia) 1983, pp. 1434-69; Marilyn Strathern, ed., Dealing with Inequality: Analysing Gender Relations in Melanesia and Beyond, Cambridge (Cambridge UP) 1987.

(5) Yvonne Knibiehler, L'histoire des mères du moyen-âge à nos jours, Paris (Edition Montalba) 1980; see also id., entry "maternity", in Encyclopédie philosophique, ed. Sylvain Auroux (forthcoming); Mireille Laget, Naissance: l'accouchement avant l'âge de la clinique, Paris (Seuil) 1982; Francoise Thébaud, Quand nos grand-mères donnaient la vie, Lyon (Presses Universitaires de Lyon) 1986; Susan R. Suleiman, ed., The Female Body in Western Culture, Cambridge (Harvard University Press) 1986.

(6) See, e.g., Signs 6/1 (1980) and 7/1 (1981); cf. Elizabeth Gross, "Philosophy, Subjectivity and the Body: Kristeva and Irigaray", Feminist Challenges: Social and Political Theory, Sydney (Allen & Unwin) 1986, pp. 125-43.

(7) See Michelle Perrot, ed., Une histoire des femmes est-elle possible?, Paris (Edition Rivages) 1984; id. et al., "Culture et pouvoir des femmes: essai d'historiographie", Annales E.S.C. 41 (1986), pp.271-93.

(8) Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community, London (Falling Wall Press) 1975; Ellen Malos (ed.), The Politics of Housework, London (Allison and Busby) 1980; Luisella Goldschmidt-Clermont, Unpaid Work in the Household: A Review of Economic Evaluation Methods, Genevra (International Labour Office) 1989.

(9) Desley Deacon, "Political Arithmetic: The 19th-Century Australian Census and the Construction of the Dependent Woman", in Signs 11/1 (1985), pp. 27-47; Gisela Bock, Barbara Duden, "Arbeit aus Liebe - Liebe als Arbeit: Zur Geschichte der Hausarbeit", Frauen und Wissenschaft, ed. Gruppe Berliner Dozentinnen, Berlin (Courage Verlag) 1977, pp. 188-99; Caroline Davidson, Woman's work is never done: A History of Housework in the British Isles 1650-1950, London (Chatto) 1982; Susan Strasser, Never Done: A History of American Housework, New York (Pantheon) 1982; Ruth Schwartz Cowan, More Work for Mother: The Ironies of Household Technology from the Open Heart to the Microwave, New York (Basic Books) 1986; Glenna Matthews, 'Just a Housewife': The Rise and Fall of Domesticity in America, New York (Oxford UP) 1982; Julie A. Matthaei, An Economic History of Women in America, New York (Schocken) 1982; Gertraude Kittler , Hausarbeit: Zur Geschichte einer "Natur-Ressource", München (Frauen offensive) 1980; Martine Martin, Le travail ménager des femmes entre les deux guerres, thèse 3ème cycle, Université de Paris VII, 1984.

(10) Alice Kessler-Harris, Out to Work: A History of Wage-Earning Women in the United States, Oxford (Oxford UP) 1982; Angela V. John, Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918, Oxford (Basil Blackwell) 1986.

(11) Regina Morantz-Sanchez, "Nurses and their History", Women's Review of Books VI/4 (1989), pp. 12-14 (six recent publications on Britain and the US).

(12) Hilda Scott, Working Your Way to the Bottom: The Feminization of Poverty, London (Pandora) 1984; Wolfram Fischer, Geschichte der Armut, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1981, passim.

(13) For instance, the Berkshire Conference on Women's History of 1987 had the overall title "Beyond the Public and the Private". See also Michelle Z. Rosaldo, "The Use and Abuse of Anthropology: Reflections on Feminism and Cross-Cultural Understanding", Signs 5/3 (1980), pp. 389-417.

(14) Cf. Carole Pateman, The Sexual Contract, Cambridge (Polity Press) 1988; Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The Power and Powerlessness of Women", paper presented at the conference on "Equality and Difference", European University Institute (Florence), December 1988.

(15) Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850, London (Hutchinson) 1987; Frank Prochaska, Women and Philanthropy in 19th-Century England, Oxford (Clarendon) 1980; Christoph Sachße, Mütterlichkeit als Beruf: Sozialarbeit, Sozialreform und Frauenbewegung 1871-1929, Frankfurt a. M. (Suhrkamp) 1986.

(16) Carole Pateman, "The Patriarchal Welfare State", Democracy and the Welfare State, ed. Amy Gutmann, Princeton (Princeton UP), pp. 231-60; Elizabeth Wilson, Women and the Welfare State, London (Tavistock) 1977; Jane Lewis, ed., Women's Welfare, Women's Rights, London (Croom Helm) 1983; Cora V. Baldock, Bettina Cass, eds., Women, Social Welfare

and the State in Australia, Sydney (Allen & Unwin) 1983; Jennifer Dale, Peggy Foster, eds., Feminists and State Welfare, London (Routledge & Kegan Paul) 1986; Helga Maria Hernes, Welfare State and Women Power, Oslo (Oslo UP) 1987; Seth Koven, Sonya Michel, "Gender and the Origins of the Welfare State", Radical History Review 43 (1989), pp. 112-19.

(17) Documents quoted in Gisela Bock, Zwangssterilisation im Nationalsozialismus: Studien zur Rassenpolitik und Frauenpolitik, Opladen (Westdeutscher Verlag) 1986, p. 87; see also pp. 369-465.

(18) Cf. Karen J. Blair, The Clubwoman as Feminist, New York (Holmes & Meier) 1980; Barbara Leslie Epstein, The Politics of Domesticity, Middletown (Wesleyan UP) 1981; Karen Offen, "Depopulation, Nationalism, and Feminism in fin-de-siècle France", in: American Historical Review 89 (1984), pp.648-76; id., "Women and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920-1940", Working Paper of the European University Institute N° 87/293, Florence 1987.

(19) In: Lamphere and Rosaldo (note 2 above), pp. 37-38.

(20) Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, Disorderly Conduct. Visions of Gender in Victorian America, New York (Knopf) 1985; Linda Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", Journal of American History 75/1 (1988), pp. 9-39; Lois W. Banner, "Women's History in the United States: Recent Theory and Practice", Recent Work in Women's History: East and West, special issue of Trends in History IV/1 (1985), pp. 93-122 (ed. by Esther Katz).

(21) Ann Oakley, Sex, Gender and Society, London (Temple Smith) 1972; Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex", Toward an Anthropology of Women, ed. Rayna Reiter, New York (Monthly Review Press) 1975, pp. 157-210; Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A useful Category of Historical Analysis", American Historical Review 91 (1986), pp. 1053-75.

(22) See, e.g., Elizabeth Gross, "What is Feminist Theory?", Feminist Challenges (note 6 above), p. 194.

(23) See esp. Rubin (note 21 above). There is a clear parallel between this kind of dichotomy and the classical marxist ideology of "structure" vs. "suprastructure". For a non-dichotomic use of "sex" and "gender" see, e.g., Marilyn Strathern, Introd. to Dealing with Inequality (note 4 above), pp. 6 and 31, note 4.

(24) There are innumerable examples of this use of "biology" in feminist works.

(25) See my brief overviews in Zwangssterilisation (note 17 above), pp. 33-34, 76, 326; and "Women's History and Gender History", Gender and History 1 (1988), pp. 11-15.

(26) See Pateman, Sexual Contract (note 14 above), p.225.

(27) Sandra Harding, "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory", Signs 11 (1986), p. 662.

(28) Mary Midgley, "On not Being Afraid of Natural Sex Difference", Feminist Perspectives in Philosophy, ed. Morwenna Griffiths, Margaret Whitford, London (Macmillan) 1988, p. 38-39.

(29) See Paola Di Cori, "Dalla storia delle donne a una storia di genere", Rivista di storia contemporanea 16 (1987), pp. 584-49; Les Cahiers du Grif 37-38 (1988), special issue on "Le genre de l'histoire".

(30) See, e.g. Marina Addis Saba, Ginevra Conti Odorisio et al., Storia delle donne - una scienza possibile, Roma (Felina) 1986, where feminism is defined as the "negation of biological inequality" (p. 59).

(31) Shulamith Firestone, The Dialectic of Sex. The Case for Feminist Revolution, New Haven (Yale UP) 1970.

(32) Carol Gilligan, In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development, Cambridge (Harvard UP) 1982.

(33) Controversial particularly in the context of the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment, the case of Equal Employment Opportunity Commission v. Sears & Roebuck (cf. Signs 2/4 (1986), pp. 751-79; 13/4 (1988), pp. 897-903), and the litigation around maternity leave and maternity benefit for employed women; see Joan Hoff-Wilson, "The Unfinished Revolution: Changing Legal Status of U.S. Women", Signs 13/1 (1987), pp. 7-36.

(34) Margaret Wright, "I want the Right to Be Black and Me", Black Women in White America, ed. Gerda Lerner, New York (Random House) 1972, p. 608.

(35) See, e.g., Adriana Cavarero et al., Diotima. Il pensiero della differenza sessuale, Milano (Tartaruga edizioni) 1987.

(36) Pateman, Sexual Contract, p. 187.

(37) See the references in note 16 above, and in Hoff-Wilson (note 32 above); Lucinda M. Finley, "Transcending Equality Theory: A Way Out of the Maternity and the Workplace Debate", Columbia Law Review 86 (1986), pp. 1118-83; Sylvia A. Law, "Rethinking Sex and the Constitution", University of Pennsylvania Law Review 132 (1984), pp. 955-1040; Herma Hill Kay, "Models of Equality", University of Illinois Law Review, vol. 1985, n°1, pp. 39-88.

(38) Hoff-Wilson, "Unfinished Revolution", p. 36; cf. Wendy W. Williams, "Equality's Riddle: Pregnancy and the Equal Treatment/Special Treatment Debate", Review of Law and Social Change 13 (1984/85), pp. 325-80.

(39) Joan W. Scott, "Deconstructing Equality-versus-Difference: Or, The Uses of Poststructuralist Theory of Feminism", in: Feminist Studies 14/1 (1988), p. 43.

(40) "Difference dilemma": Scott, "Equality-versus-Difference", p. 48; cf. p. 39. See also "Wollstonecraft's dilemma": Pateman, "Welfare State" (note 16 above), p.252.

(41) See Pateman, Sexual Contract, esp. ch.4.

(42) Adriana Cavarero, "Eguaglianza e differenza sessuale: le amnesie del pensiero politico", paper presented at the conference mentioned in note 14 above.

(43) Pateman, Sexual Contract, and id., "Women's Citizenship: Equality, Difference, Subordination", paper presented at the conference mentioned in note 14 above. See also Jean Bethke Elshtain, "The Feminist Movement and the Question of Equality", in: Polity VII/4 (1975), pp. 452-77; Douglas Rae et al., Equalities, Cambridge (Harvard UP) 1981.

(44) Karen Offen, "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach", Signs 14/1 (1988), pp. 119-57; see also id., "Depopulation" (note 18 above).

(45) See, e.g., Annarita Buttafuoco, Cronache femminili. Temi e momenti della stampa emancipazionista in Italia dall'Unità al fascismo, Siena (Università di Siena) 1988, esp. the introduction; Jane Rendall, ed., Equal or Different. Women's Politics 1800-1914, Oxford (Basil Blackwell) 1987; Jane Lewis, "Models of Equality for Women: The Case of State Support for Children in 19th-Century Britain", Florence, 1987 (Working Paper N° 87/314 of the European University Institute); Suzy Fleming, Introduction to: Eleanor Rathbone, The Disinherited Family (1924), Bristol (Falling Wall Press) 1986, pp. 9-120; Susan Kingsley Kent, "The Politics of Sexual Difference. World War I and the Demise of British Feminism", Journal of British Studies 27 (1988), pp. 232-53.

(46) See Monika Richarz, Jüdisches Leben in Deutschland, 3 vols., Stuttgart (Deutsche Verlagsanstalt) 1976-1982; Reinhard Rürup, Emanzipation und Antisemitismus, Göttingen (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht) 1975.

(47) Marion A. Kaplan, The Jewish Feminist Movement in Germany. The Campaigns of the Jüdischer Frauenbund, 1904-1938, Westport (Greenwood Press) 1979.

(48) Anna Yeatman, "Women, Domestic Life and Sociology", in: Feminist Challenges (note 6 above), p. 177.

(49) "Allein das rechtfertigt schon unser Interesse": Ulrich von Hehl, "Edith Stein und die Deportation der katholischen Juden aus den Niederlanden", Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 30 March 1987.

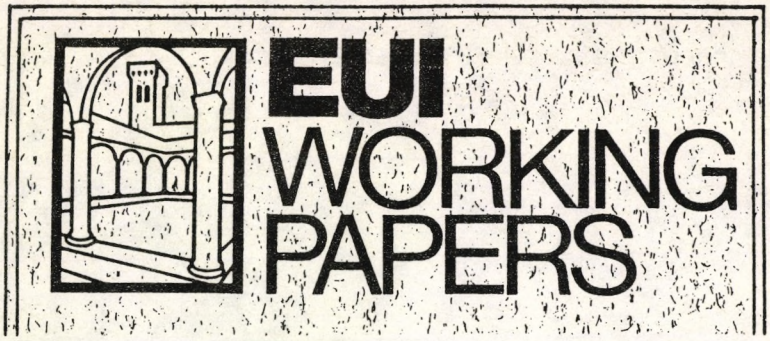
(50) Klaus Erich Pollmann, "Arbeiterwahl im Norddeutschen Bund 1867-70", Geschichte und Gesellschaft 15/2 (1989), p. 165.

(51) Hans-Ulrich Wehler, Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte 1815-1845/49, München (Beck) 1987, pp. 716, 733; "male suffrage" in Peter Flora, State, Economy and Society in Western Europe 1815-1975, vol. 1, Frankfurt a.M. (Campus) 1983, p. 91.

(52) See, e.g., Susan Magaray, "Australian Women's History in 1986", Australian Historical Association Bulletin, October 1987, pp. 5-12.

(53) For attempts at redefinition see for instance Midgley (note 27 above), p. 39, and Pateman, Sexual Contract.

(54) One example is Jill Stephenson, The Nazi Organisation of Women, London (Croom Helm) 1981, who underlines that this book is "(not) intended to be of the 'women's history' genre" (p.11).



EUI Working Papers are published and distributed by the European University Institute, Florence.

Copies can be obtained free of charge - depending on the availability of stocks - from:

The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I - 50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

Please use order form overleaf

PUBLICATIONS OF THE EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY INSTITUTE

To The Publications Officer
European University Institute
Badia Fiesolana
I - 50016 San Domenico di Fiesole (FI)
Italy

From Name .....
Address .....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Please send me the following EUI Working Paper(s):

No. .....
Author, title: .....
.....
.....
.....
.....

Date .....

Signature
.....

88/355
Summary of Conference Debates and Abstracts of Selected Interventions
The Future Financing of the EC Budget: EPU Conference 16-17 October 1987

88/356
Mary McCARTHY/
Lucrezia REICHLIN
Do Women Cause Unemployment? Evidence from Eight O.E.C.D. Countries

88/357
Richard M. GOODWIN
Chaotic Economic Dynamics

88/358:
Fernando PACHECHO/
Eric PEERE/
Francisco S. TORRES
Duopoly Under Demand Uncertainty

88/359
Jaakko NOUSIAINEN
Substance and Style of Cabinet Decision-Making *

88/360
Domenico Mario NUTI
Economic Relations between the European Comunity and CMEA *

88/361
Domenico Mario NUTI
Remonetisation and Capital Markets in the Reform of Centrally Planned Economies

88/362
Domenico Mario NUTI
The New Soviet Cooperatives: Advances and Limitations

88/363
Reiner GRUNDMANN
Marx and the Domination of Nature, Alienation, Technology and Communism

88/364
Tony PROSSER
The Privatisation of Public Enterprises in France and Great Britain: The State, Constitutions and Public Policy *

88/365
Silke BRAMMER
Die Kompetenzen der EG im Bereich Binnenmarkt nach der Einheitlichen Europäischen Akte *

88/366
Gøsta ESPING-ANDERSEN
The Three Political Economies of the Welfare State *

88/367
Gøsta ESPING-ANDERSEN/
Paul FARSUND/
Jon Eivind KOLBERG
Decommodification and Work Absence in the Welfare State

88/368
Stephen MARTIN
Joint Ventures and Market Performance in Oligopoly

88/369
Giuseppe RAO
The Italian Broadcasting System: Legal and Political Aspects

* Working Paper out of print

89/370
B. BENSAID/
R.J. GARY BOBO
S. FEDERBUSCH/
The Strategic Aspects of Profit Sharing in the Industry

89/371
Klaus-Dieter STADLER
Die Europäische politische Zusammenarbeit in der Generalversammlung der Vereinten Nationen zu Beginn der Achtziger Jahre

89/372
Jean-Philippe ROBE
Countervailing Duties, State Protectionism and the Challenge of the Uruguay Round

89/373
G. FEDERICO/A. TENA
On the Accuracy of Historical International Foreign Trade Statistics.
Morgenstern Revisited

89/374
Francisco TORRES
Small Countries and Exogenous Policy Shocks

89/375
Renzo DAVIDDI
Rouble Convertibility:
A Realistic Target

89/376
Jean STAROBINSKI
Benjamin Constant: la fonction de l'éloquence

89/377
Elettra AGLIARDI
On the Robustness of Contestability Theory

89/378
Stephen MARTIN
The Welfare Consequences of Transaction Costs in Financial Markets

89/379
Augusto DE BENEDETTI
L'equilibrio difficile. Linee di politica industriale e sviluppo dell'impresa elettrica nell'Italia meridionale: la Società Meridionale di Elettricità nel periodo di transizione, 1925-1937

89/380
Christine KOZICZINSKI
Mehr "Macht" der Kommission? Die legislativen Kompetenzen der Kommission bei Untätigkeit des Rates

89/381
Susan SENIOR NELLO
Recent Developments in Relations Between the EC and Eastern Europe

89/382
Jean GABSZEWICZ/
Paolo GARELLA
and Charles NOLLET
Spatial Price Competition With Uninformed Buyers

* Working Paper out of print

89/383
Benedetto GUI
Beneficiary and Dominant Roles in Organizations: The Case of Nonprofits

89/384
Agustín MARAVALL/
Daniel PEÑA
Missing Observations, Additive Outliers and Inverse Autocorrelation Function

89/385
Stephen MARTIN
Product Differentiation and Market Performance in Oligopoly

89/386
Dalia MARIN
Is the Export-Led Growth Hypothesis Valid for Industrialized Countries?

89/387
Stephen MARTIN
Modeling Oligopolistic Interaction

89/388
Jean Claude CHOURAQUI
The Conduct of Monetary Policy: What has we Learned From Recent Experience

89/389
Léonce BEKEMANS
Economics in Culture vs. Culture in Economics

89/390
Corrado BENASSI
Imperfect Information and Financial Markets: A General Equilibrium Model

89/391
Patrick DEL DUCA
Italian Judicial Activism in Light of French and American Doctrines of Judicial Review and Administrative Decisionmaking: The Case of Air Pollution

89/392
Dieter ZIEGLER
The Bank of England in the Provinces: The Case of the Leicester Branch Closing, 1872

89/393
Gunther TEUBNER
How the Law Thinks: Toward a Constructivist Epistemology of Law

89/394
Serge-Christophe KOLM
Adequacy, Equity and Fundamental Dominance: Unanimous and Comparable Allocations in Rational Social Choice, with Applications to Marriage and Wages

89/395
Daniel HEYMANN/
Axel LEIJONHUFVUD
On the Use of Currency Reform in Inflation Stabilization

* Working Paper out of print

89/396
Gisela BOCK
Challenging Dichotomies:
Theoretical and Historical
Perspectives on Women's
Studies in the Humanities and
Social Sciences

89/397
Giovanna C. CIFOLETTI
Quaestio sive aequatio:
la nozione di problema nelle
Regulae

89/398
Michela NACCI
L'équilibre difficile. Georges
Friedmann avant
la sociologie du travail

89/399
Bruno WANROOIJ
Zefthe Akaira, o delle identità
smarrite

* Working Paper out of print