

Feature Article 【專題論文】

Humanism in the Perspective of Gender Studies 性別研究視野中的人文精神

Ilse LENZ*

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* Chair for Gender and Social Structure, Faculty of Social Science, Ruhr-University Bochum, Germany.

Abstract

First, humanism is considered in its national and its global constellation. The national constellation of humanism was derived from an image of man as the hegemonial male citizen whereas women and subordinate men were excluded. In the global constellation, humanism needs to acknowledge equality and difference. In this context, gender studies are considered for their debates on equality and difference and its three approaches of essentializing, differentiating or deconstructing gender differences. Culture and gender conflicts are increasing in the global constellation. The author pleads for reflexive universalism and proposes a model for ordering egalitarian and hierarchical approaches to gender and culture. This model also suggests the affinity of humanism, reflexive universalism and feminism.

摘要

首先，人文精神被置於其國族與其全球群體中加以思考。人文精神的國族群體起源於將人想像為霸權主義下的男性公民，而女人和身為下屬的男人皆被排除在外。在全球群體中，人文精神必須承認平等和差異。在此脈絡下，性別研究乃因其在平等與差異上的討論，以及其扼要表達、區分、解構性別差異等三種途徑，而被思考。在全球群體中，文化與性別的衝突正處於增加的狀態。作者為反射的普遍主義辯護，並提出一個模型，為在面對性別與文化時所使用的平等主義的途徑和分級的途徑整序。該模型亦顯示出人文精神、反射的普遍主義、和女權主義的相似之處。

Humanism: The Challenge of Inequality and Differences

Humanism looks for the humanity of human beings. But we have to reconsider the humanistic image of "man" in modernity. We can differentiate between different constellations – the national and the universal constellations.

In the national constellation, the image of "man" was the citizen participating in and upholding the national polity and thus endowed with the right to vote and the duty to fight for the fatherland. In other words, this image was nationalized and gendered and it implied inclusions and exclusions based on gender, ethnicity/race and class. For Western nations, the French Revolution which proclaimed the rights of man is a case in point: Citizenship and the suffrage were extended to French men who staffed the revolutionary defense armies.

But women's demands for suffrage and public participation were refused because they were considered as a special kind of humanity, namely as mothers and housewives. The sexual contract assigning them to the private sphere of the household and subsuming them under the authority of its male head preceded the social contract.¹ The black revolutionaries in the French Caribbean colonies who like Toussaint de L'Ouverture demanded human rights were deprived of citizen status and once again reduced to the status of slaves. Thus a hegemonial homogeneous image of universal "man" = citizen = men of the dominant national group became the cornerstone for the modern national polity. National women were defined as special biological form of humanity and thus deprived of full citizenship.² Africans and other noneuropean people were defined mainly as different cultural form of humanity; meanwhile, biological racism also served as a modern ideology of colonialism, subordination and exclusion.

1 Carol Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1988).

2 Claudia Honegger, *Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib 1750-1850* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1991).

Modern science and knowledge systems have tended to systematize these differences of gender or "race" as anthropological axiomatic assertions resulting from biology. Historians like Ute Frevert traced the processes in which the assumption of a modern gender dualism became social ideology.³ This gender dualism is defined as a modern scientific set of beliefs through which humanity is divided into two biologically defined and separated gender groups – male and female. These dual gender definitions serve to classify all people, provide obligatory gender norms and assign roles: for men the role of political and market citizen; for women the modern norm of mother and housewife as unpaid carer for family members. Such gender dualism then legitimized gender inequality in modern states and societies.

Furthermore, the Western white male ideal citizen tended to be imagined with a focus on his head, the home of lofty ideas and individual interest. The body and its need for eros, love or care were hardly reflected in this image. The model of freedom was individual autonomy without attachments: The leading image was the free son emancipated from the authority of his father and the care of his mother, but not the mother giving care to related persons.

New approaches in anthropology, history and biology have shown the ideological character of gender dualism as a scientific ideology. Female husbands in West Africa, male fathering the Trobriand islands and female hunters have disproved the anthropological axiom of man the hunter, warrior and citizen and his housewife.⁴

In the case of "race" similar dualisms were proposed to legitimate Western colonialism and dominance. Mostly they argued from the dualism of white man

3 See Ute Frevert, "Mann und Weib und Weib und Mann," *Geschlechterdifferenzen in der Moderne* (München: Beck Verlag, 1995); Claudia Honegger, *Die Ordnung der Geschlechter: Die Wissenschaften vom Menschen und das Weib 1750-1850* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 1991).

4 Susanne Schröter, *FeMale: Über Grenzverläufe zwischen den Geschlechtern* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2002).

and black subjects. But this racist dualism has been clearly exposed as a scientific biological ideology except in some parts of socio-biology.

The national hegemonial image of the male citizen was not limited to the West in modernity, however. In some East Asian nations,⁵ the national image of man was rather the neoconfucian male leader who opted for combining modernization and cultural harmony and who defended the fatherland against imperialism. Women were also excluded from politics and assigned to the household based on the cultural norms of gender hierarchy.⁶

Now in the global constellation, the national homogenous image of "man = hegemonial men" has proved morally untenable and increasingly obsolete. The national homogenous images of "man" are overturned and reconceptualized in democratization and internationalization. Women, migrants and minorities gained a voice in social and political contentions. Humanism is confronted with overcoming fictive homogeneity and developing images of "persons" based on difference. In a further step it will have to find ways to reconcile the difference of human existences with the dignity and equality of all human beings.

In this context, gender studies may provide innovative approaches for overcoming hegemonial homogeneous images of man and conceptualizing humanistic images that embrace equality and difference.

5 I refer to Japan, South Korea and Taiwan after Japanese colonialism. The political culture and the concept of citizenship in the People's Republic of China was rather limited with its stress on class antagonism and proletarian dictatorship, but it tended to integrate women in the public sphere.

6 In Japan, women demanded suffrage from the movement for freedom and people's rights (1874-1889) until 1945, but they were excluded from political participation while all Japanese men as well as Korean and Taiwanese men living in Japan received the vote after 1925. Japanese women received equality and the suffrage in 1945 under the Allies and US occupation after World War II. Colonial subjects in the Japanese colonies were excluded from suffrage. After decolonization, women were extremely marginalized in politics and the public in Japan as well as Korea and Taiwan until the 1970s.

Gender Studies: Equality and Difference

Gender studies have developed internationally and have taken roots in most regions. They were faced with the issues of differences, embodied subjects and the chances and risks of universalism. These are also crucial issues for humanism. In the following, I want to elaborate on these issues by attempting to open up feminist perspectives for humanism in the hope of further dialogue. What are the possible contributions of gender studies and feminism for these problems?

Feminist movements have refuted the assumption that sameness or homogeneity is the rational foundation for equal rights in modern polity and society. Women do not have to become men to claim equality. Rather, they argued for equality in social and political participation while recognizing difference. Gender studies have also analyzed these issues from political and social theory. Starting from the proposition of equality and difference, they developed diverse approaches to grapple with this tension.

1) The first approach emphasized difference between men and women and argued for a reevaluation of women's work and contributions. It referred to social factors as the unequal gender division of labour, according to which women have been socialized for care and family work. So, gender dualism was basically reaffirmed, but it was revalued in a way that it should now legitimate gender symmetry (and not inequality).

This position in stating differences was influenced by the communalist turn of social movements in the early 1970s. The black power movement in the US called for the formation of the black community and a black nation. Radical feminists "invented" their women's community in view of gender inequality and violence. As in the slogan of "global sisterhood," they tended to homogenize differences between women. As a consequence, demands for equality have been charged with communalist semantics and an underlying dualism (women-men;

black-white; migrant-autochthonous). Even some postcolonial approaches have not avoided this communalism.

But in modernization, men's (as well as women's) social positions become even more heterogeneous according to class, migration, desire or religion. Gender dualism is not an adequate tool to analyze these increasing differentiations.⁷

2) The second approach of intersectionality of class, "race", desire and gender. Kimberlé Crenshaw proposed the term intersectionality for analyzing configurations of differently constituted forms of inequality.⁸ "Consider an analogy to traffic in an intersection, coming and going in all four directions. Discrimination, like traffic through an intersection, may flow in one direction, and it may flow in another. If an accident happens in an intersection, it can be caused by cars traveling from any number of directions and, sometimes, from all of them. Similarly, if a Black woman is harmed because she is in the intersection, her injury could result from sex discrimination or race discrimination."⁹ In the twenty years since Crenshaw proposed this concept, it has been elaborated in an intense debate (Lenz 2010; Lutz et al. 2011).¹⁰ But the basic point is the differentiation of difference, namely to analyze how different kinds of inequality interchange and intersect in complex forms. Thus, the debate shows ways beyond one-dimensional understandings of class (or gender or "race"/"culture"). It also looks

7 Ilse Lenz, "Power People, Working People, Shadow People...Gender, Migration, Class and Practices of (In-)Equality," in Ilse Lenz, Charlotte Ullrich, and Barbara Fersch (eds.), *Gender Orders Unbound: Globalisation, Restructuring and Reciprocity* (Leverkusen: Barbara Budrich, 2007), pp. 99-120.

8 Cf. Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 139 (1989), pp. 139-167, and Ilse Lenz, "Power People, Working People, Shadow People...Gender, Migration, Class and Practices of (In-)Equality."

9 See Kimberle Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics," p. 149.

10 See Ilse Lenz, „Intersektionalität“, in: Ruth Becker, and Beate Kortendiek (eds.), *Handbuch der Frauen- und Geschlechterforschung* (Wiesbaden: VS-Verlag 2010), pp. 158-165; Helma Lutz et al., *Framing Intersectionality* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011).

at the interrelationship of material structures of inequality and cultural images and representations (Degele, Winker 2009; Lenz 2010).¹¹

3) A third important current consists of constructivist examinations of gender, "race", "culture", ethnicity or desire. These approaches have contested that difference as a category legitimated by biology has been socially constructed: The understandings of gender as well as "race" have developed in the specific context of Western modernity. Furthermore, these categories are enacted and performed in everyday interactions so that persons have to demonstrate their competency as "man" or "woman". In this perspective, gender is an effect of this performativity and not an essential biological trait.¹² In other words, constructivist approaches assume that postulated anthropological differences are constructed in the context of power relations, pervading not only modern societies but also modern science.

Thus, gender studies have proposed to base the image of the person and citizenship on equality and difference. They also have developed three ways of conceptualizing differences: Essentializing, differentiating or deconstructing gender differences. The last two ways of differentiating or deconstructing are promising for the conceptualization of other differences structured by class, "race", "culture", ethnicity or desire.

11 See Gabriele Winker and Nina Degele, *Intersektionalität: Zur Analyse sozialer Ungleichheiten* (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2009); Ilse Lenz, not listed in WORK CITED.

12 See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Candace West and Sarah Fenstermaker, "Doing Difference," in Sarah Fenstermaker and Candace West (eds.), *Doing Gender, Doing Difference* (New York, London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 55-80.

Intercultural and Gender Conflicts in Europe

Gender studies have aimed to integrate the body into the concept of the human person because male dominance was rooted in the control over women's bodies and sexuality. The debates on self-determination included the choice over motherhood or sexuality.¹³ The terms of the embodied subject and intimate citizenship point to these intimate dimensions of the human person.¹⁴ They form the center of personal identity and human dignity. But they also constitute the core of cultural or ethnical norms: like the concept of chastity, wearing the veil or covering/uncovering women's body become symbols of group honour, which has to be protected often by male force or violence. Following Max Weber, these groups are called communalistic groups or "we-groups:" They are constituted by beliefs in the community which are founded upon shared traits like common belief, language, honour etc. and upon boundary demarcation to the "others."¹⁵

Thus, gender norms and the control of female bodies and sexuality are the core symbols and meanings for communalistic groups. This may explain why gender conflicts bring an explosive quality into intercultural relations. These norms have legitimated exclusion and violence towards women and homosexuals of their own and the "other's" groups. Many case studies have proved this repressive side of gendered control in the conflicts over the veil or in the act of enforcing "honour," which may even lead to family or communal killing of persons with autonomous or dissident lifestyles.¹⁶

13 Ilse Lenz, *Die Neue Frauenbewegung in Deutschland: Abschied vom kleinen Unterschied. Eine Quellensammlung* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2008).

14 Kenneth Plummer, *Intimate Citizenship: Private Decisions and Public Dialogues* (Seattle: Washington, 2003).

15 Georg Elwert, Nationalismus, Ethnizität und Nativismus – über Wir-Gruppenprozesse," in Peter Waldmann and Georg Elwert (eds.), *Ethnizität im Wandel* (Saarbrücken; Fort Lauderdale: Breitenbach, 1989), pp. 21-60.

16 According to a study of the Max Planck Institute in 2011 in the case of "honour killings" among migrants in Germany, 70% were female and 30% were male (<http://www.spiegel.de/panorama/justiz/0,1518,778249,00.html>; download 9.10.2011)

These conflicts have now manifested in two issues on gender and body. Firstly, several European governments have legally prohibited the wearing of the Islamic burqa, namely the full-body and face-covering veil. Belgium and France passed laws that forbid burqa or veils that cover the face in 2010, a change that is soon to be followed by Holland in 2011. Populist and anti-Islamic groups have demanded the prohibition of burqa in several European countries. Also, secular and Islamic European feminists have argued for the ban of wearing burqa in public. This poses the issue of the relationship between feminism and racism. Simple attacks on “racist Western feminisms” do not do justice to the complexity of the issue, because women and migrants are on both sides. Many migrant men and women criticize these laws not because of sympathy for burqa per se but because they see them as an attack against multiculturalism and as a discrimination of Islam. Other Islamic feminists, however, stand by the ban because they see communal pressure in veiling the body. They demand equal freedom for Islamic girls and women in their wardrobe choice. They attack multiculturalism because individual rights are denied to migrant women when referring to the communal culture. There is no easy way out of this conflict between the rights of the cultural group argued by (mostly male) communal leaders and individual rights demanded by women in their freedom to their sexuality.

The second explosive issue is homosexuality in Islamic migrant groups. Homosexuality has been largely de-stigmatized in Western European societies; meanwhile, EU directives and national legislations have also prohibited discrimination against different sexual orientation. In conservative Islamic immigrant communities, homosexuality is a marked taboo and sometimes punished informally. There have been attacks on gay men by immigrant youth gangs. Still the Catholic Church and some protestant currents also disapprove strongly of homosexuality. But in the case of a federal state in South West Germany, immigrants were asked about their attitude towards homosexuals in an integration test that was relevant for their right to stay. In this case,

nondiscrimination for homosexuals (which is a basic human right) has been included as a standard in determining "acceptable" or "nonacceptable" migrants. Tolerance for homosexuals and gender equality has thus been transformed into a communal German value despite the fact that such discrimination abounds in the more religious and conservative German groups.

In these intercultural and gender conflicts, humanism is confronted with conflicting demands for recognition and their different logics: Demands for individual rights for equality and autonomy conflict with the communalist or culturalist assertions claimed by cultural leaders or representatives. Humanism did not always take the side of individual women, youth or dissident men, but tended to conflate group rights or multicultural approaches with individual human rights.

Reflexive Universalism

How can this value conflict between individual human dignity and communal rights be negotiated? In this context, I want to propose the concept a reflexive universalism. Western universalism has been criticized as Eurocentric, for it was derivative of European values and used them as a standard to measure other cultures. Thus it contributed to legitimate colonialism, imperialism and racism in global scale.

Postcolonial authors therefore tend to privilege the particular rather than the universal and to prefer small-scale narrations of everyday life to the great modern narrations of freedom, equality and solidarity. But as gender studies have shown, the particular, the small worlds of the household, the neighbourhood or ethnic patronage are by no means free from domination and violence.

Universalism should not be discredited simply because of its Eurocentric history. For the problem is its Eurocentric limitation that made universalism

contradict itself – not in its unlimited promises of freedom, equality and solidarity, which now have become global claims and needs. Universalism can overcome its limitation by recognizing difference and equality and criticizing domination. In other words, universalism can become reflexive when it reflects critically on its own context, its inter-linkage with domination and the relationship to its partners.

Humanism, Reflexive Universalism and Feminism

Reflexive universalism, humanism and feminism show a potential affinity as suggested in table 1.

Table 1: Hierarchy and Equality in Concepts of Culture and Gender

		Concepts of gender	
		Universal gender equality	Hierarchical gender order
Concepts of culture	Universal equality of cultures	Reflexive universalism Global feminism Humanism	Neo-patriarchalism referring to multiculturalism or cultural difference
	Communalism and ethnocentrism	Ethnocentric or racist gender politics Ethnocentric or racist feminism	Neopatriarchal ethnocentric gender order

The table shows possible combinations between concepts of equality or hierarchy relating to gender or culture. It is designed to outline the different possible positions beyond the dualism of individual versus communal rights or racist feminism versus gender blind communalism.

If universal gender equality is combined with ethnocentrism or communalism, we can speak of an ethnocentric feminism. Often women of the national majority point to the "poor subordinated women" of the other culture in order to highlight the modernity or progressiveness of one's own group. These brands of feminism can contribute to legitimate an ethnocentric or racist gender politics which

disregards the individual human rights of persons. One example is the debate over higher marriage ages for migrant spouses in Europe which is legitimated by claiming to protect women from arranged marriages and consequent family inequality. However, why should migrant women attain a higher age before sharing the same right with the local women? Such fundamentally ethnocentric positions are sometimes manifested in liberal and conservative gender politics.

When the universal equality of cultures is asserted without taking gender equality into consideration, neo-patriarchal gender relations can be reestablished. In Canada, the introduction of *sharia* right for the Islamic community is now being debated without adequately considering the consequences for gender inequality in the family and community. In Germany, several court decisions decreed that migrant husbands should be conceded divorce on special conditions or that their domestic violence should be condoned as a part of their "different culture." This gender blind multiculturalism was even applied in cases of migrant husbands with a long stay in Germany.

The combination of cultural hierarchy and inequality can lead to blending ethnocentrism and sexism in ways which lead to serious infringements of human/women's rights. The honour killings mentioned above are a sad example.

These three combinations illustrate that the issue of reflexive universalism is not just an academic question, but can be quite crucial in the increasing conflicts between the complex inequalities of gender, migration and class.

The combination of universal cultural and gender equality is characteristic of several currents of thought: reflexive universalism, humanism and global feminism. This shows their affinity and their potential for finding new ways in recognizing equality and difference, solving conflicts and enriching each other.♦

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