

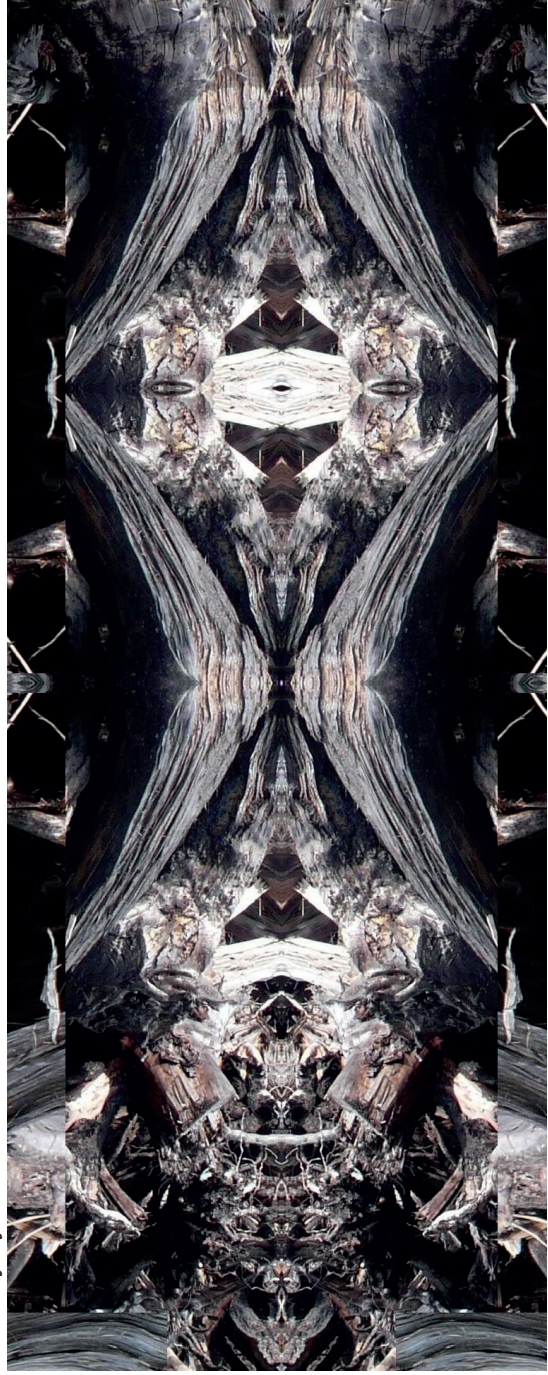


VOLUME 16

# The Care-Centered Economy

Rediscovering what has been taken for granted

An essay by **Ina Praetorius**





# **THE CARE-CENTERED ECONOMY**



**HEINRICH BÖLL STIFTUNG**  
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**VOLUME 16**

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**An essay by Ina Praetorius**

**Edited by the Heinrich Böll Foundation**

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## FOREWORD

Since 2008, politics and society have been in a state of constant alert. The global food crisis, the financial and climate crises, the euro and Eurozone crisis, as well as the increasing number of armed conflicts around the world have received considerable media coverage and shape public perception of the state of the world. The crisis has become permanent, and sounding crisis alert has become habitual. Political action aimed at resolving the causes of the crises, however, has not been inspired by this. Nonetheless, a debate about the necessity of changes, of a transformation, has been taking place in broad sections of politics and society for several years now. The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU) has proposed a «Social Contract for Sustainability.»

The normative project for the future of green politics is called «Socio-Ecological Transformation.» The Scholarship Program of the Heinrich Böll Foundation, for instance, supports young people who are researching the topic in their respective disciplines. There are indeed different understandings of the term transformation. What transformation in fact means and its feasibility have therefore been subject to a great deal of dispute. There are differing views of political endeavors and their prospects for success. It is necessary, however, to understand that transformation means prevailing over the old, starting something new and inducing a paradigm shift, whereas reform is limited to changing and continuing within the old. Reforms are nonetheless important steps in creating the political and legal scope to enable transformation. But reforms alone are not enough, and transformation is even actively impeded when realpolitik loses sight of visions out of mere pragmatism, or when it places itself paternalistically above the reasoning and creative power of a committed citizenry. All this (re-)creates disaffection with politics and slows down active engagement.

Over the past few years, the Heinrich Böll Foundation has given people with highly individual approaches to the challenge of transformation the possibility of contributing to the discussions and introducing food for thought through several essays. After the transformation designer Harald Welzer (*Mental Infrastructures—How growth entered the world and our souls*, 2011), the cultural studies expert Sacha Kagan (*Toward Global (Environ)mental Change—Transformative Art and Cultures of Sustainability*, 2012) and the biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber (*Enlivenment—Towards a fundamental shift in the concepts of nature, culture and politics*, 2013), we have now requested a contribution from the theologian and feminist lateral thinker Ina Praetorius. She takes readers on a journey through the Western history of ideas while exploring the dichotomy of the binary gender order. The essay places special emphasis on the origins and principles of operation of the dichotomous symbolic order, which manifests itself to the present day (not only) in the distinction between

the «higher» monetized economy and the «pre-theoretical» «private sphere,» with its female connotations. The Biblical patriarchy, the European Enlightenment, the «invisible hand» of economic liberalism, and the focus of socialist theories on industrial work are given consideration within the discussion. A central concern of the essay is to uncover these correlations to help create the possibility of shaping human economic activity in a sustainable and fair way to enable a good life for everyone. It is this specific and at times theological approach taken by the author, based on the history of ideas, that makes the deep-rootedness of an inequitable dichotomous order in our organization of the economy and society comprehensible. The symbolic order has become firmly established over and over again, and has thus entrenched itself deeply, and often unconsciously, in our societies' normative power of memory. The «backpack of history» thus makes it possible to understand why gender policy cannot be successful without abolishing the structural inequalities that have been handed down historically and culturally. Christian tradition and the colonial history of the «Occident» have left behind traces in many parts of the world that are evident right up to the present day. Hence, there is a shared responsibility to overcome them.

For decades now, feminists and care economists have been criticizing the exclusion from consideration of unpaid care work (comprising about 50 percent of all work necessary in society). Although the «crisis of social reproduction» they have described is inextricably linked with other dimensions of the crisis, the issue has still not gained public awareness as such. Politics does not recognize it as a structural crisis, instead treating it as a matter of social policy in its individual manifestations, e.g., measures against the crisis in nursing care, additional pension credits recognizing time spent by mothers in child-rearing, or the right for children to be at a day-care institution as assistance for parents in reconciling work and family life.

To this day, there has been no coherent post-dualistic theory of the «totality of the economy» (Adelheid Biesecker). This applies not only to the discovery or rather re-discovery of caregiving, but also to all areas of human nature and culture. To establish such a theory it will be necessary for feminist scientists and heterodox economists, particularly those in the younger generation, to collaborate even more closely. Strategic implementation calls for alliances across the political spectrum and an informed citizenry in order to create the momentum needed for transformation.

Berlin, February 2015

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# INTRODUCTION

In all the economics textbooks that I know, economics is defined as the satisfaction of human needs based on the division of labor, for instance:

«The task of economics is to examine how resources for satisfying human needs can be most effectively produced, distributed, and used or consumed.»<sup>1</sup>

Or like this:

«Economic activity based on division of labour is a societal process designed to satisfy the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life.»<sup>2</sup>

This widely accepted definition framework corresponds to the original meaning of the term *oikonomia*. It is derived from the Greek words for household (*oikos*) and law or custom (*nomos*), and thus roughly means «principle of running a household» or «law of the house.» That it is the households' task to provide the basic necessities of life was already established in the 4th century B.C.: for Aristotle, who first systematically developed the term in his *Politics*,<sup>3</sup> *oikos* is the basic institution of human coexistence, in which the «necessities of life» are produced and provided, without which people can «neither live nor live well.»<sup>4</sup>

It is important to organize the satisfaction of human needs in a manner based on an intelligent division of labor. For there are no humans who are in need of nothing, and the earth may be a generous living space, but at the same time it is limited: if humankind intends to survive, it must treat the earth with care. Today, for this reason, economics has become a kind of bellwether science from which many people obtain their view of what is normal and right, who they are as humans and how they should behave. Whether economics describes the world adequately is thus by no means a trivial matter. It is not trivial, for instance, that modern science, which examines «how resources for satisfying human needs can be most effectively produced, distributed and used or consumed,» disregards about half<sup>5</sup> of these measures and resources: of

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1 Günter Ashauer 1973, 5.

2 Peter Ulrich 2008, 1 [slight modification by this translator].

3 See Rosemarie von Schweitzer 1991, pp. 51-56.

4 Aristotle 1973, 51.

5 That unpaid care services make up about half of the work necessary to society has been confirmed by extensive studies. For the most recent research see Hans Baumann et al. 2013, *Care, Krise und Geschlecht* 2013, Dossier *Care-Ökonomie* 2010 ff. On the global situation see *Gender & Care* 2009.

all things, those measures for satisfying needs that are adopted in private households (*oikoi*), and without which hardly anyone would have survived as a child, are studied today in economic science not at all or only marginally, and are often distorted as mere «consumption.»

What is this grave omission all about? Why are all those means and measures for satisfying needs—which despite emancipation are provided for free by many more women than men in the so-called private sphere—customarily defined as pre- or non-economic? This essay is about this question. To answer it, an intellectual journey through Western history will be necessary.

And there is more to it than that: Why is there still a tendency to consider a large proportion of all activities carried out in households—cleaning, washing, cooking, nursing, babysitting ...—part of «female nature»? How did the proverbial grouping of *Kinder, Küche, Kirche* [children, cooking, church] come about? How does the fact that certain people, spheres and activities are considered not only «feminine» but also especially «natural» or «close to nature» relate to what is now being opposed as «exploitation of nature»? What does the strangely split view of economic activity mean for the cohabitation of the seven billion—and soon more—who inhabit the fragile habitat of earth together with countless other living beings? Can the gender-specific division of labor, perceived in the meantime as a notorious «problem,» be eradicated through the concept of «equal opportunity»? Or is the popular identification of gender politics with equal opportunities policy—and thus its dissociation from so-called general policy issues—part of the problem it sets out to solve? And if equal opportunity is not the solution: what other policy is necessary to correct the mistakes not only of economics but of the entire symbolic order of which Western economics and economic science—which have now come to dominate the globe—are a part so all people can live together on peaceful and beneficial terms?

In the first section I will examine how people have imposed boundaries not only between «man» and «nature» but also straight through all of humanity. The question that follows is with what strategies the many people who were defined out of the economy and into nature have attempted to reclaim their dignity. Which of these strategies is sustainable? In the third section, while referring to Thomas Kuhn's theory of the paradigm shift, I describe to what extent the necessary post-dichotomous re-orientation of the economy has already started at the midpoint it has set itself. In the fourth section, finally, I address, in the form of an open-ended list, initiatives that rediscover the self-evident truth which has been concealed by the dichotomous economy: the fact that *all* of us are part of nature, with needs, finite, limited *and at the same time* free to organize our existence in the fragile habitat earth in such a way that modest and pleasurable coexistence is possible. You are expressly encouraged to add to and continue this list.

# 1 The dichotomization of humanity. A journey through a<sup>6</sup> history

Those who participate in the discourses of social and ideological criticism encounter time and again the almost routine complaint about the dualistic split between «man» and «nature.»<sup>7</sup> For instance, Andreas Weber writes in his essay *Enlivenment* that the economy's endless focus on competition as a social form—and at the same time on money as the (supposedly) general medium of exchange—is directly connected to the metaphysical separation between «human culture» and «brute matter»: the fact that «man» is traditionally thought of as the controlling opposite of the natural placed his existence—as we are now finally recognizing under the pressure of ecological urgency—in a problematic or even absurd relationship to the rest of nature.<sup>8</sup> Anyone who advocates sustainable development of human coexistence in the fragile cosmos must as a consequence work towards dismantling the dualism between humans and nature.

There is no question that the opposition between «man» and «nature» diagnosed here constitutes part of the history of the West. It can be traced as far back as the classical Greek era. Without a doubt it is one of the fundamental causes of the precarious situation into which human civilization, despite all its progress, has maneuvered itself. However, Andreas Weber and many other critics of dualism err when they consider the dichotomization of human culture and nature «endless.»<sup>9</sup> The construct in question always *ended* precisely at the point where human beings, aspiring to spiritualization and independence, want and need to be provided with their daily needs—with warmth, love, protection, meals, purpose, cleanliness, and more—and when they want to procreate. Human *needs*—which cannot be eliminated and are unceasing—impose boundaries everywhere and always on the concept of the independence of *homo sapiens* from nature. But philosophers are loath to mention this:

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6 In my culture, «Western» culture, it has become common practice to define a certain construction of past events history as «history.» By deciding to use the indefinite article instead of the definite article, I am indicating that I consider this usage questionable. At the same time I am inviting you to perceive, emphasize and bring up other histories.

7 The Latin term for «nature» derives from *nasci* and means «to be born.» See 4.7.

8 Andreas Weber 2013, 26.

9 «This unfolding of modern economic thinking with its *endless* focus on competition developed in tandem with dualism—the metaphysical division of the world into 'brute matter' to be exploited and 'human culture' ...» (Andreas Weber 2013, 26. [emphasis I.P.]).

From a certain stage in the history of humankind onwards, since influential thinkers seem to have experienced their own naturalness—and thus the limits of their removal from nature—as a nuisance, as a humiliating deprivation of their liberty, they have not only conceived of themselves as the site of an immortal spirit, but at the same time have invented compensatory human ways of existence that are supposedly closer to nature<sup>10</sup> and thus not conceived or structured for a life in freedom and equality but for serving in subordination. In the history of Western explanations of the world, therefore, «the» human hardly ever meant all members of the species.<sup>11</sup> Instead, what was meant were primarily or exclusively white adult propertied local men, who had themselves cared for by wives, male and female slaves, domestic servants, maids, menials, nannies, mothers, grandmothers, day care professionals, neighbors, care migrants, «domestic animals»:<sup>12</sup> primarily in private<sup>13</sup> households, which each conceptually are under the control of a «free» citizen and in which everyone's needs are (should be) fulfilled so discreetly that the heads of the family more or less succeed in creating the appearance in the public sphere of being the independent beings virtually without needs which they fantasize themselves as being.

## 1.1 The question of the beginnings

How and where people began to separate higher, free, symbolic (and often also real) masculine spheres of humanity from lower, dependent, «feminine,» natural ones, what came before, and when what came before was superseded on a lasting basis and for what reasons by the multi-dimensional dichotomous symbolic order still in effect today, is contentious and the subject of a vast field of speculations that interest me here only in the form of questions: Did early agrarian societies, in the scope of an original accumulation of means of production, develop a practice of abducting women<sup>14</sup> in the course of which men took advantage of the «ambivalence of hunting tools»<sup>15</sup> to forcibly gain possession of women—as a doubly productive labor power? Was there another form of society before the patriarchy, a matriarchal one that was forcibly eliminated by men—as a consequence of whatever events or interests?<sup>16</sup> Is it not so much the subjugation of women that is primary, but rather the seizure through war and enslavement of entire nations? Was the beginning even the psychological dilemma of a masculine «womb envy,»<sup>17</sup> which—after the gradual discovery of the

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10 See on this, e.g., Susan Griffin 1987, Evelyn Fox Keller 1986.

11 See on this, e.g., Silvia Bovenschen 1980, Adriana Cavarero 1989, Susan Moller-Okin 1979, Ina Praetorius 1993 and many others.

12 Immanuel Kant 1996 (1784), 58 (see also note 51).

13 The Latin term for «private» is *privare* and means «to deprive.» What is meant is the absence (deprivation) of freedom in the *oikos*.

14 Claude Meillassoux 1983; see also Claudia von Werlhof et al. 1983.

15 Claudia von Werlhof et al. 1983, 179.

16 See, e.g., Gerda Weiler 1983.

17 See Mariam Lau 2001.

function of male sperm<sup>18</sup>—initially turned into its overvaluation? Or do all these factors and more come together?<sup>19</sup>

At any rate: the fact is that in the eastern Mediterranean area in the centuries before the turn of the eras, a construction of the world was established and stabilized in countless texts, the key points of which can be summarized as follows:

- There are two kinds of humans, free and unfree, and there are two sexes, men and women.
- Men are more important, smarter, stronger, and freer than women.
- The benchmark for defining what is human is the local adult man.
- There are people—wives, children, slaves—who are legitimately possessed by other people—masters and mistresses.
- That there are free and dependent people in these terms corresponds to the natural or divine law (*logos*)<sup>20</sup> and is thus unalterable.<sup>21</sup>

## 1.2 Xanthippe and Socrates: Life begins on the other side?

The story of the death of Socrates, as handed down in Plato's «Phaedo» dialogue (428-348 B.C.), can be considered an important key scene in establishing the dichotomous symbolic order, often made light of as a «body-soul dualism»:<sup>22</sup>

The Athenian authorities have sentenced Socrates to death because he is said to have led the youth astray and to have denied the gods. Before he drinks the deadly poison, he gathers his friends in prison to reflect with them about the meaning of death. So that the philosophizing men can do this *undisturbed*, Socrates' wife Xanthippe is first led away with their son, because she bewails the impending death, making clear that she places too much emphasis on this mortal world:

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18 Since the male contribution to human reproduction is not evident but rather had to be discovered only gradually, there were various theories of conception in ancient times that are all obsolete now. Originally, procreation presumably seemed to be a purely feminine ability. For the ancient cultures of the Near East through the Hellenistic period, Staubli/Schroer (2014) summarize the development in this way: «The link between sexual intercourse, admitting the sperm ... by the woman, menstruation/fertility and pregnancy was known. ... The more precise biological processes of conception, however, were unknown into the Hellenistic period. They imagined that a tiny person was put in the woman by the man, similar to placing a seed in the soil, and grew there if the woman was fertile.» (Staubli/Schroer 2014, 49).

19 For a discussion of the interaction between various forms of discrimination in the scope of a fundamentally dichotomous model, see the «intersectionality» research approach, e.g., Gabriele Winker et al. 2009.

20 On the term *logos* see 1.11.

21 Symbolic orders that share these main points can also be traced in other regions of the world. For instance, Confucianism, which originated in East Asia at about the same time and is also in effect right up to the present day, shows numerous parallels to Aristotelian metaphysics. I will limit myself here to a sketch of the significant traditions in the Occident.

22 Plato 1955.

On entering, we (Socrates' friends, I.P.) found Socrates ... and Xanthippe—you know her—sitting beside him with his little son. When Xanthippe saw us, she cried out and said the sort of things that women always do, «Oh! Socrates, this is the last time your friends will ever speak to you, or you to them!» Socrates looked at Crito and said, «Crito, let someone take her home»; and some of Crito's retainers took her away, crying aloud and beating her breast.<sup>23</sup>

The woman and child *are a disturbance* when the men begin to agree that only with death does real life begin, provided that death releases the immortal soul from the prison of the body and thus from everything that sets bounds to it. Both the woman who bore him and the child become the symbol of the material,<sup>24</sup> natural, inconstant, unauthentic, disgraceful side of existence:

The body presents us with innumerable distractions, because of the necessity of looking after it; ... The body fills us with emotions of love, desire, and fear, with all *kinds of phantasy* and nonsense, ... it seems, we shall have our heart's desire, that of which we claim to be lovers, even *wisdom*—when we die, ... for then, but not till then, the soul *will be independent, free from the body*.<sup>25</sup>

After Socrates has declared that for the truly wise *the real is on the other side, incorporeal and invisible*, he performs serenely, almost joyfully the death sentence on himself, not without reprimanding his friends who are still blinded<sup>26</sup> for their womanish lack of self-control:

A boy handed Socrates the cup. Socrates took it ... quite serenely, and without any trembling, or any change in color or countenance, but ... raised the cup to his lips, and showing not the least distaste, quite unperturbed, he drained the draught.<sup>27</sup>

Most of us had till then been more or less able to restrain our tears, but when we saw him drinking and then that he had drunk it, we could do so no longer. For my part, despite my efforts I found that the tears flooded down my cheeks (...) he made everyone present break down, except Socrates himself. «What are you doing, strange fellows?» he said, «That was *my chief reason for sending the women away, so that they shouldn't make this mistake*» (...). At this *we felt ashamed*, and checked our weeping.<sup>28</sup>

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23 Ibid. 6.

24 The Latin term *materia* comes from the Greek term *meter* and means «mother.»

25 Plato's *Phaedo*, 50-51 (emphasis I.P.).

26 In another key scene, the *cave allegory* (Plato, *The Allegory of the Cave*, translated by Benjamin Jowett, 2010, 7), people who have not yet arrived at knowledge of the truth are described as blinded by the initially intolerable light of knowledge. See on this Luce Irigaray 1980, 303-321.

27 *The Dialogues of Plato*, 147.

28 Ibid. 147 (emphasis I.P.).



### 1.3 Soul and body, *polis* and *oikos*, master and slave, man and animal: Aristotelian metaphysics

One generation after Plato, Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) further developed the dichotomy of the world sketched out in *Phaedo* into higher and lower, soul and body, male and female, eternal and temporary, sublime and disgraceful, freedom and dependency into the unified metaphysics which is still influential today:

We will therefore restrict ourselves to the living creature, which, in the first place, consists of soul and body; and of these two, the one is by nature the ruler, and the other the subject. (...) for the soul rules the body with a despotic rule, whereas the intellect rules the appetites with a constitutional and royal rule. And it is clear that the rule of the soul over the body, and of the mind and the rational element over the passionate is natural and expedient; whereas the equality of the two or the rule of the inferior is always hurtful. (...) Again, the male is by nature superior and the female inferior; and the one rules, and the other is ruled, this principle, of necessity, extends to all mankind. Where then there is such a difference as that between soul and body, or between men and animals (...) the lower sort are by nature slaves, and it is better for them as for all inferiors that they should be under the rule of a master. (...) It is clear, then, that some men are by nature free, and others slaves, and that for these latter slavery is both expedient and right.<sup>29</sup>

That the pervasive dichotomization correlates with the interests of the (supposedly) independent citizen of the *polis* in conceiving of the *oikos* as a sphere in which dependents, controlled by masters, satisfy everyone's need by working physically, ensure reproduction of the species, and thereby create their masters' (supposed) freedom, is clearly stated in *Politics*:

The rule of a household is a monarchy, for every house is under one head: whereas constitutional rule is a government of freemen and equals (...) There is likewise a science of the master, which teaches the use of slaves; for the master as such is concerned, not with the acquisition, but with the use of them. Yet this so-called science is not anything great or wonderful, for the master need only know how to order that which the slave must know how to execute. Hence those who are in a position which places them above toil have stewards who attend to their households while *they occupy themselves with philosophy or with politics*.<sup>30</sup>

Aristotle clearly equates *oikonomia* with the sphere of needs which is held in subordination, which is why it is defined to the present day as «a societal process designed

<sup>29</sup> Aristotle 2005, 33-34.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 56 (emphasis I.P.).

to satisfy the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life.»<sup>31</sup> To be sure, the early theoreticians of the economic distinguished between household arts and the art of wealth acquisition. They did not call the latter «economy,» however, but rather «chrematistics,»<sup>32</sup> and called explicitly for subordinating wealth acquisition at all times to caring for human needs in order to integrate its inherent tendency to boundlessness into the purpose of the good life on a lasting basis. Only later, explicitly in the 18th century, did people split the «societal process designed to satisfy human needs» itself in two by reinterpreting needs-centered *oikonomia* to the mere sphere of consumption or to «life» and placing above it programmatically a higher virile sphere with the ostensibly self-regulating «free» market. The fact that this also resulted in what Aristotle had warned about, namely the perpetuation of an «economy» that does not deserve the name, because instead of revolving around human needs it revolves around a newly conceived, invisible «other reality,» to wit money and thus the potentially infinite amassing of wealth, can hardly be denied in an era of late-capitalist predatory exploitation of humanity and the natural world.

#### 1.4 God the Lord and the silent woman: the patriarchal monotheisms

In 2006 Pope Benedict I identified Christianity in his famous Regensburg lecture as the «profound harmony between what is Greek in the best sense of the word and the biblical understanding of faith in God.»<sup>33</sup> Indeed, what we now call «Christianity» or «the Christian West» can be read as a synthesis of two distinct conceptions of the world, which are not, however, as far apart as some Philhellenic spirits would wish: The Greek classical era and the «faith in God based on the Bible» both have their origins in the ancient Near East; both posit the institution of slavery; both are, at least in terms of their superficial structures, patriarchally/dualistically constructed in terms of the criteria listed under 1.1; both reflect the transition from the polytheistic to the monotheistic construction of the world; and, besides ideas of (more or less) eternal hierarchical orders, both contain dynamic emancipatory elements, such as the idea of the equality of all human beings before God and concepts of justice derived from this.

In the melting pot of the Roman Empire, whose official philosophy borrowed heavily from Greek classicism, various worldviews, embodied for instance in itinerant teachers like Jesus of Nazareth, social outsiders like Mary Magdalene, and enthusiastic educated citizens such as Paul the Apostle, came into contact with each other and formed new connections. From the 4th century A.D. onwards, the syncretism of the Hebrew/biblical faith in God, which is rooted in turn in the polytheisms of the ancient Near East and its patriarchalizations<sup>34</sup> and Platonic-Aristotelian metaphysics, developed into the powerful institution of the Roman Church. It was the Roman Church in particular which handed down the dogma of the omnipotent, otherworldly, invisible

31 Peter Ulrich 2008, 1 (see note 2).

32 Aristotle 2005; see also Rosemarie von Schweitzer 1991, 51-56.

33 Faith, Reason and the University, 2006.

34 See Othmar Keel 2007a and 2007b.

God and the essentially differing «dignity»<sup>35</sup> of the sexes, despite all partial reform, renewal, and Enlightenment movements, defending both views until today against various movements towards the «dehellenization»<sup>36</sup> of the symbolic order:

In our times the question of «women's rights» has taken on new significance in the broad context of the rights of the human person. *The biblical and evangelical message* sheds light on this cause ... by safeguarding the truth about ... that dignity and vocation that result from the specific diversity and personal originality of man and woman. Consequently, ... the rightful opposition of women to what is expressed in the biblical words «He shall rule over you» (Gen 3:16) must not under any condition lead to the «masculinization» of women. ... women must not appropriate to themselves male characteristics contrary to their own feminine «originality.» There is a well-founded fear that if they take this path, women will not «reach fulfillment,» but instead will *deform and lose what constitutes their essential richness*. It is indeed an enormous richness. ... The personal resources of femininity are certainly no less than the resources of masculinity: they are merely different.<sup>37</sup>

Even so, despite all the persistent church paternalism, in 2013 there does seem to be a feminine plural and «profound questions»:

The church acknowledges the indispensable contribution which women make to society through the sensitivity, intuition and other distinctive skill sets which they, more than men, tend to possess. I think, for example, of the special concern which women show to others, which finds a particular, even if not exclusive, expression in motherhood ... Demands that the legitimate rights of women be respected, based on the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity, present the Church with profound and challenging questions ... .<sup>38</sup>

There can be no doubt that in both the Old and New Testament of the Bible as well as in the Koran of late antiquity,<sup>39</sup> strong traditions are at work which identify the divine with an *invisible higher reality, which is accessible only to or primarily to men*. Social orders are similarly pronounced in all three major monotheisms in how they make the feminine into a part of nature and allocate to women the role of the privatized house-keeper who meekly accepts the masculine power of definition:

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35 See Chap. 4.10 of this essay for discussion of the term «dignity.»

36 Faith, Reason and the University, 2006.

37 Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* 1988, 10.

38 *Apostolic exhortation Evangelii Gaudium of the Holy Father Francis to the bishops, clergy, consecrated persons and the lay faithful on the proclamation of the gospel in today's world*. 2013, 82 65f.

39 See Angelika Neuwirth 2010.

As in all the congregations of the Lord's people women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (1 Cor 14:33-35)

However, all three monotheisms also contain lines of tradition that run contrary to dichotomization and open up areas for post-dualistic interpretations which are well advanced in the meantime, primarily in the form of feminist and post-patriarchal theologies: that God created humans «in his own image ... as male and female» (Gen 1:27) indeed confirms the dualism of the sexes, but already at the beginning of the Bible it challenges the supposedly unquestionable identification of the divine with the «higher masculine.» With the doctrine of the Christian Trinity or triune God, particularly the concepts of the birth of God<sup>40</sup> and the unpredictable power of the Holy Spirit, Christian dogma ruptures the idea of a disinterested Lord God enthroned on high. That women are not kept away from the execution of Christ and from the place of Resurrection, as in the case of the Platonic Xanthippe, but rather occupy key positions in what is happening as doers and agents of the Gospel, marks a clear difference to the only ostensibly obvious, Platonically understood focus on the afterlife of Christian tradition. In Islam too, the identification of Allah with the higher masculine is more a product of cultural usurpation than theological reflection. Allah is in any case only rarely called «Lord,» «Father,» or «King» in mosques, and «113 of the 114 Quranic Surahs start with the phrase 'In the name of God, the All-Merciful, the All-Compassionate,»<sup>41</sup> while at the same time it should be noted that the Arabic terms for divine mercy, *ar-Rachim* and *ar-Rachman*, can be traced back to the word for the female organ of the uterus. For their part, *ar-Rachim* and *ar-Rachman* are related to the Hebrew root *rhm*, which already designates divine and human mercy at the beginning of the First Testament.<sup>42</sup>

In this way, in all monotheistic traditions—perhaps in all religions—alternative doctrines and practices can be found that contradict the hegemonic doctrine of the independent, spiritual masculine to which natural functional human forms of existence are subject in a compensatory fashion. Linking up with such lines of tradition and bringing them up to date is an important element of present-day transformatory politics.<sup>43</sup>

There is variation in the way Greco-Roman metaphysics, which in the history of the origins of the three great monotheisms has intertwined with the worldviews of the ancient Near East—which are also patriarchal but less static—has affected the many specific contexts to which it was transferred, for instance through Christian missionary work. Thus, it is probably no coincidence that the Scandinavian societies, which

40 See the deliberations on thinking of natality in Chap. 4.7 and Chap. 4.8 of this essay.

41 Mouhanad Khorchide, *Islam is Mercy: Essential Features of a Modern Religion*, transl. by Sarah Hartmann, Freiburg: Verlag Herder, 2015, p. 19.

42 Othmar Keel 2007b, p. 91; Ina Praetorius 2014.

43 See Chap. 4.8 of this essay.

were less exposed to Roman influence in the ancient and medieval eras than south and central Europe, broke away from patriarchal structures with comparative ease. And it is certainly no coincidence that political-religious renewal movements of the recent past—such as Latin American liberation theology, feminist theology arising in North America, Korean Minjung theology and Black liberation theology—do not have their roots in the Mediterranean area shaped by Greco-Roman culture.

## 1.5 Human dignity and persistent paternalism: the European Partial Enlightenment

That the dichotomization of humanity long established by the end of the Middle Ages survived the Protestant Reformation, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment in Europe virtually unscathed has by now been proven by a number of studies.<sup>44</sup> The entanglement of the founding discourse of modern science with the long-practiced dualistic gender ideology reflected, for instance, in the writings of Francis Bacon (1561-1626) can be considered paradigmatic.<sup>45</sup> For Bacon, the scientist is just as unquestionably male as nature is female: Bacon's man of science viewed nature as a «slave» and «bride, who requires taming, shaping, and subduing by the scientific mind» and ultimately contracts a «chaste and lawful marriage» with the masculine spirit.<sup>46</sup> With sexualized imagery for the relationship between humankind, conceived as masculine, and feminized nature, Bacon, like all his contemporaries in Europe in the early modern era, was able to link seamlessly to the conviction ubiquitous before, during, and after his time—often implicit—that the *res cogitans* was always to be thought of as male, whereas femaleness was to be attributed to the *res extensa*, which could be used and exploited.

It is no surprise that the same identification of active appropriation of nature with «maleness» and of passive nature with «femaleness» can also be found in the history of economic dogma. William Petty (1623-1687), an early theoretician of economic liberalism, became known for his pertinent maxim: «Labour is the Father and active principle of wealth, as lands are the Mother.»<sup>47</sup>

This complementary view of the difference between the sexes is consistent with the momentous decision not to conceive the individual as the fundamental unit of the economy even in the modern era, but instead the patriarchally structured family, and as a consequence to regard wages as a «family reproduction wage.»<sup>48</sup> This family wage is normally paid to the father of the family and head of household, who continues to be considered the sole representative and guardian of wife and children.

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44 See note 11.

45 In her analysis (Fox Keller 1986, 40-50), Evelyn Fox Keller exposes the Oedipal character of Bacon's argumentation: «The aggressively male stance of Bacon's scientist» could «be seen as driven by the need to deny what all scientists, including Bacon, privately have known, namely, that the scientific mind must be, on some level, a hermaphroditic mind.» (42).

46 Ibid. 43.

47 Petty 1662, 49.

48 Ibid. 74.

Continuing with emancipatory elements of the Jewish-Christian-Muslim tradition, for instance, the First Testament theme of all humans being the image of God, European Enlightenment philosophers developed the principle of general inalienable human dignity as a corrective:<sup>49</sup>

The human being and in general every rational being exists as *an end in itself*, not merely as a means to be arbitrarily used by this or that will, but in all its actions, whether they concern himself or other rational beings, must be always regarded at the same time as an end. (...) Accordingly the practical imperative will be as follows: So act as to treat humanity, whether in your own person or in that of any other, in every case at the same time as an end, never as a means only.<sup>50</sup>

That Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) also intended this principle of autonomy and all «rational beings» being an end in themselves to refer to women can be seen in the well-known passage from his polemic «Answering the Question: What Is Enlightenment?», in which he opposes the practice of gender guardianship and warns women against remaining «domestic animals» in imposed immaturity:

Those guardians, who have graciously taken up the oversight of mankind, take care that the far greater part of mankind (including the entire fairer sex) regard the step to maturity as not only difficult but also very dangerous. After they have first made their domestic animals stupid (...) they show them the danger that threatens them if they attempt to proceed on their own.<sup>51</sup>

In his pre-Critique anthropological writings, however, Kant described not only the «fair sex» but also entire ethnicities as for the most part resistant to the Enlightenment. He does not appear to have explicitly withdrawn the relevant passages later, leading to the conclusion that his critical writings remain ambivalent regarding the question of whether he considers women and non-Europeans «rational beings» and thus bearers of human dignity, saying about the former:<sup>52</sup>

Woman is intolerant of all commands and all morose constraint. They do something only because it pleases them, and the art consists in making only that please them which is good. I hardly believe that the fair sex is capable of principles.<sup>53</sup>

Kant states about Black Africans:

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49 On Kant's ambivalence regarding the interpretation of the difference between the sexes, see Ursula Pia Jauch 1988.

50 Immanuel Kant 2005, 87-88 (emphasis I.P.).

51 Immanuel Kant 1996 (1784), 58-59.

52 On Kant's ambivalence regarding the gender issue, see Ursula Pia Jauch 1988.

53 Immanuel Kant 1960. (1766) 81.

The Negroes of Africa have by nature no feeling that rises above the trifling. ... So fundamental is the difference between these two races of man [the white one and the black one I.P.], and it appears to be as great in regard to mental capacities as in colour.... The blacks are very vain but in the Negro's way, and so talkative that they must be driven apart from each other with thrashings.<sup>54</sup>

That the European Enlightenment philosophers spent their lives in a society in which «higher» education was reserved practically unquestionably to local men from the «upper» classes, made such prejudices and the long-standard and notorious equating of the concepts «human being» and «European citizen,» seem plausible, despite any logical inconsistency. How natural this still was in the 18th century becomes apparent with the French Revolution motto of «freedom, equality, fraternity,» and the fact that Olympe de Gouges (1748-1793) was not successful in her lifetime with her «Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen,» but was instead condemned to the scaffold.

The failure of the Enlightenment to turn the mechanism of dichotomization itself on its head had particularly serious consequences in the form of the founding discourse of economic liberalism. Adam Smith (1723-1790) only rarely used the metaphor of the godlike «invisible hand» himself. But that in his theory of the «wealth of nations»<sup>55</sup> he made the innumerable unpaid hands of women and colonized people working outside the «manufactures» (now commonly called «sectors of the economy»)<sup>56</sup>—everything that today is being examined and conceptualized as care work, reproduction or «housewifization of women»<sup>57</sup>—vanish into the fiction of a mechanism of supply and demand functioning automatically for the purpose of satisfying the needs of all, leads right up to the present day to the terrible distortions in economic theory construction which are the primary subject of this essay.

## 1.6 Work and love, gender and national characters: the 19th century

The dichotomization of humanity that had become standard both socially and symbolically over many centuries not only outlasted the European Enlightenment but also experienced a renaissance in the 19th century in the form of historical-philosophical «general contractors.» For Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831) as well as for Karl Marx (1818-1883), who by no means turned his idealist godfather on his head but rather placed him on a kind of alternative head, women, colonized people, and non-human nature remained by and large the pre-economic source of supply which fed the great progress of a virile Euro-centric humanity toward self-realization of the absolute spirit, everlasting peace, or a classless society. In Hegel's teleology of history, «the woman» becomes the representation of the unconscious spirit through

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54 Ibid. 307.

55 Adam Smith 1978.

56 Ibid. See also Chap. 1.11 of this essay.

57 Claudia von Werlhof et al. 1988, 159.



which—or passing by which—high-flying manhood works its way up to the light of self-consciousness:

The one extreme, universal spirit conscious of itself, becomes, through the *individuality* of man, linked together with its other extreme, its force and its element, with *unconscious* spirit. On the other hand, *divine* law is individualized, the *unconscious* spirit of the particular individual finds its existence, in woman, through the *mediation* of whom the unconscious spirit comes out of its unrealizedness into actuality, and rises out of the state of unknowing and unknown, into the conscious realm of universal spirit.<sup>58</sup>

The gender essentialism integrated into historical dialectics continues in historical materialism in the sense that the economic achievements of private households, non-human nature, and to some extent also the colonies continue to be omitted from economic theory and class struggles. Since Karl Marx and his followers focused almost exclusively on monetized industrial wage labor and its organization, they maintained continuity with the bourgeois father figures from whom they meant to distance themselves, and in this way found themselves in new inconsistencies, the effects of which in real-life socialism were not only the unresolved housework issue, but also, causally related to it, an obliviousness to the environment in no way less than that of the capitalist economic system:

All the labour that goes into the production of life, including the labour of giving birth to a child, is not seen as the conscious interaction of a human being *with* nature, that is, a truly human activity, but rather as an activity *of* nature, which produces plants and animals unconsciously and has no control over this process. This definition of women's interaction with nature—including her own nature—as an act *of* nature has had and still has far-reaching consequences. What is mystified by a biologically skewed concept of nature is a relationship of dominance and exploitation, dominance of the (male) human being over (female) nature.<sup>59</sup>

That in the context of industrialization romanticized ideas of nature as bounteous and also, following the dichotomous image of humanity that was already common practice, tenets of the natural capacity to love, thoughtfulness, submissiveness and «the woman's» and «the savage's»<sup>60</sup> need to be supervised were developed, is only logical, considering the interest in unpaid services that can be profitably exploited. By defining the other as «nature,» «natural» or «close to nature,» it is not only easier to exploit it, but systematically removes the obligation to treat with respect that would be imposed by the categorical imperative *to act in such a way that human beings, both in*

58 Georg Friedrich Wilhelm Hegel 1977 (1806-1807), 266.

59 Claudia v. Werlhof et al. 1983, 45 (emphasis by the authors).

60 See for example Karin Hausen 1976.



*one's own being and in any other person's, are always regarded as an end, not merely as a means.*<sup>61</sup> That these doctrines of the particular naturalness of certain human beings often formulated first in a mild, sentimental form are open for extreme race and gender ideologies—right through to the national socialist concept of the worthless life—has been demonstrated a number of times in the history of the 20th century. It is not by chance and is a large step forward that after the end of the Second World War instruments were created in the form of general human rights declarations—and in Germany specifically as Art. 1 Par. 1 of the Basic Law—that confront the various dichotomizations of the human with a universal, transnationally recognized standard.

## 1.7 A divided economy

In 1980, the UN published a finding that has since been cited frequently:

Women represent 50 per cent of the world adult population and one third of the official labour force, they perform nearly two thirds of all working hours, receive only one tenth of the world income and own less than 1 per cent of world property.<sup>62</sup>

This sentence highlights the consequences of 2,500 years of dichotomous order, and makes abundantly clear that the transnational proclamation of equal rights for all humans is not sufficient to guarantee these rights are upheld—or even to abolish the pervasive dichotomization. Indeed, a great deal has happened since then: already in 1979 the UN General Assembly adopted the «Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.»<sup>63</sup> It went into effect on December 3, 1981 and has in the meantime been ratified by almost all member states. That around the world there is considerable room for improvement regarding the enforcement of women's rights as human rights<sup>64</sup> can be considered a globally recognized fact. Several highly effective World Conferences on Women—Mexico 1975, Copenhagen 1980, Nairobi 1985, Beijing 1995—have taken place.<sup>65</sup> As part of or as a consequence of feminist criticism of science, which by now has reached all disciplines, new subject areas have arisen that have developed a significant knowledge base: care ethics and care economy, nursing science, gender studies, feminist and post-patriarchal philosophy and theology, and more. Many of these new domains of knowledge have acquired a stable form in regional or global associations, such as for instance IAFFE (International Association for Feminist Economics)<sup>66</sup> with its professional journal

61 See note 50.

62 United Nations Report 1980.

63 [www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CEDAW/Pages/CEDAWIndex.aspx)

64 See Chap. 1.5 of this essay.

65 On the complex relationship between global women's rights policies and local attainment or non-attainment of women's rights, see Christa Wichterich 2009.

66 [www.iaffe.org](http://www.iaffe.org)

*Feminist Economics*,<sup>67</sup> and the IAPH (International Association of Women Philosophers).<sup>68</sup> In the scope of gender-sensitive research, new methodological approaches have been developed: «intersectionality»,<sup>69</sup> for instance, in the nineties, which since then has been continuously further developed; it systematically explores the «interwoven nature of inequality dimensions.»<sup>70</sup> In 2009, Elinor Ostrom was the first woman to receive the Nobel Prize for Economics for her research into various forms of the community use of shared resources (*commons*), which since then has given strong momentum to criticism of the market-centered economy with its one-dimensional image of humanity as the *homo oeconomicus*. And in the spring of 2014, building on the pioneering work of the American author Riane Eisler,<sup>71</sup> the «care revolution»<sup>72</sup> was launched in Berlin as a collective movement to get business and society to go back to their core business: the «good life for everyone—around the world.»<sup>73</sup>

However, there can be no question of the *breakthrough* of a new scientific paradigm<sup>74</sup> that places humans—defined as part of nature—and with them human needs at its center (again), specifically in the leading science of economics: although on the first pages of economics textbooks there is agreement that economic activity is to be understood as «a societal process designed to satisfy the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life,»<sup>75</sup> in the ensuing discourse even theoreticians critical of the mainstream stereotypically reduce economics to a doctrine of the «higher» sphere of monetized transactions: «The approach of an integrative economic ethics aims ... at establishing an economic ethics ... of the market economy.»<sup>76</sup>

It thus comes as no surprise that a new collection of accounts of the «classics of economic thinking» begins with a quotation from the Japanese economist Takashi Negishi from 2008 stating that «truly, there is nothing new under the sun!»<sup>77</sup> in economics. It is likewise unsurprising that this collection contains the biographies of thirty-five men, including only one who is not from Europe or the US, and no women.

## 1.8 Nature as a boundary in itself and the question of meaning

That it has always been possible to include human beings in the variable concept of nature in order to make them easier to utilize, that this continues to be frequently practiced, pushing human beings to the very margins of what could be considered human dignity or shutting them out completely, does not mean, however, that the

67 [www.feministeconomics.org](http://www.feministeconomics.org)

68 [www.women-philosophy.org](http://www.women-philosophy.org)

69 See, e.g., Gabriele Winker et al. 2009.

70 Ibid. 12.

71 Riane Eisler 2007.

72 <http://care-revolution.site36.net> See Chap. 4.12 of this essay.

73 The first networking conference of the care revolution (Berlin, March 14-16, 2014) was entitled: «Bring on the good life—for everyone around the world!»

74 See Chap. 3 of this essay.

75 Peter Ulrich 2008, 1. See note 2.

76 Ibid. 109.

77 Heinz D. Kurz (ed.) 2008, 7.

natural does not exist per se: it exists as the corporeality of each individual homo sapiens, just as it does as flora and fauna, as water, air, rocks, biodiversity, as the material substrate of every «mental» activity, any culture, and all economic activity.

Awareness has been growing all around the world since the 1970s that human beings are part of nature and our coexistence exists in a bounded, fragile cosmos, which must be preserved as a necessary condition for human beings to live. No matter how «the» human being is defined, no matter how transcendent or spiritualized or intellectual he or she is according to this definition, no matter what is found to be useful in a newly configured concept of nature predicated on personal interests, there are boundaries that nature itself imposes on controlling and monopolizing appropriation. While the struggles of individuals or groups that find themselves unjustly on the side of a would-be pre-economic «lifeworld,» a seemingly mute nature that can be used and exploited at will, can still operate in the conventional framework of the criticism of ideology, the multi-dimensional refusal of the natural itself to submit to the pervasive logic of exploitation without perishing from it verges on the absolute: when there is no fertile soil left, you may still be able to raise crops *hors-sol* and vertically. But at some point, no more food will grow. Without fertile soil, breathable air, food and potable water, however, human beings cannot survive; without active care, humanity does not reproduce itself; and without meaning, people descend into depression, aggression and suicide. The attempts made by space travel and computer science to shift human life into space or into virtual worlds have not, at least for the time being, presented any livable alternatives.

Words like «catastrophe,» «permanent crisis,» or «multiple crises» are thus probably among the most frequently used in political discourse at the beginning of the 21st century: people talk about not only financial, economic, banking, valorization and environmental crises. More serious than anything that can be at least temporarily repaired by means of technical adjustments is the crisis of meaning that is spreading in the late stage of the dichotomous order: why work at all if working amounts to nothing more than functioning for absurd, other-directed purposes? Why keep living or even conceiving and bearing children if there is no future in sight worth living?

It is primarily such questions about the *meaning of everything* that are giving politics a new momentum today and (could be) giving rise to new alliances on this side of conventional party lines and divides. Even if the boundaries of the natural have not yet been reached, the idea that they soon could be triggers surprising initiatives: for instance, the question about what politics, economics, and science actually are, or could be, again on this side of pacifying social engineering articulated in the public sphere by movements such as *eco-feminism*, *Occupy*, *Attac*, and *Degrowth*. Or unpredictable new beginnings in terms of «peninsulas against the current,»<sup>78</sup> in which born human beings are trying out, in the here and now, how meaningful existence feels on the earthbound side of life concepts—long grown flawed—originating in the only apparently omnipotent great beyond, which in the West has long stopped involving the «Lord God» but has instead taken up residence in the vicinity of

78 Friederike Habermann 2009. See Chapter 4.3 of this essay.

Wall Street, explaining why the perpetrators of 9/11 deliberately chose not to attack a cathedral, but instead attacked the twin towers of the World Trade Center as «symbols of globalized modernity.»<sup>79</sup> Or intellectual movements that, instead of placing at their center opposition to a system that has long exhausted its ability to answer questions of meaning, consciously place it in the *thereafter*: post-modernism, post-capitalism, post-secularism,<sup>80</sup> post-colonial and post-patriarchal thinking.

## 1.9 Another dualism: secularism and the question of meaning

However, individuals who place the question of the *meaning of everything* in the public sphere of Western-oriented—or, more simply and precisely: Occidentalized—societies find themselves confronted with another, specifically modern dichotomy: that between the privatized search for meaning and public political mechanics.

In the European «Partial Enlightenment,» the influence of the overly powerful institution of the church was pushed back—for good reason—along with its «old-fashioned language games»<sup>81</sup> and meanings of life. While religion and religiousness were not abolished, they were explicitly declared a private affair. The consequence of this was that the religious communities remained patriarchally organized in terms of the traditional order, but at the same time mutated into places which—in the sense of the proverbial grouping of «children, cooking, church»—were frequented by the privatized sex: while men of science applied themselves to researching and objectifying the world—formerly «this world»—they took a fresh look at religion as the unenlightened and trivial matter of women and children, to be used at most as a rhetorical instrument and tranquilizer for a «people» still «in need of» the consolatory reference to the hereafter, as Kant said:

To expect of prayer other than natural effects is *foolish* and needs no explicit refutation. (...) He who can in another way attain to the effects for which prayer is recommended will *not be in need* of it. (...) The consequence of this is that he who has made great moral progress ceases to pray, for honesty is one of his principal maxims. (...) In public sermons before the public, prayer must be retained, because it can be rhetorically of great effect, and can make a great impression. Moreover, in sermons before the people, one has to appeal to their *sensuality* and must, as much as possible, *stoop down* to them.<sup>82</sup>

Privatized religious creation of meaning—the disavowed «opium of the people»<sup>83</sup>—remains convenient for the smooth functioning of coexistence particularly because it still pacifies and calms, and because the naive<sup>84</sup> ethical questions of children, the

79 Jürgen Habermas, 2003, 101.

80 Ibid. 103 and passim.

81 Ibid. 106.

82 Immanuel Kant, cited in Paul Carus, *The Religion of Science*, pp. 88-99 (emphasis I.P.).

83 Karl Marx 1843.

84 The Latin term for «naive» is »nativus» and means «belonging to birth, natal.»

human newcomers,<sup>85</sup> with whose care and cultural and moral stabilization women are still primarily charged, are very hard to answer without reference to a loving God. These days, for this reason, it is practically proverbial that church pews are filled «only with old women»—unless they are, in fact, empty.

Assigning questions of meaning to the private sphere, however, declares that the public sphere, and with it politics, is more or less a meaningless mechanism. As Jürgen Habermas diagnosed shortly after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, they are cut off from the «scarce resource of meaning,»<sup>86</sup> upon which even a religion-free politics remains dependent unless it intends to become the custodian of the market mechanism, which does not permit any collectively posed question of meaning because it «pulls all interpersonal relations under the constraint of an ego-centric orientation toward one's own preferences.»<sup>87</sup> To *nonetheless* confront politics today—which has become social technology and thus (apparently) without any alternative—with the question of *what it all actually means*, is thus a kind of test of courage. If someone dares, for instance, on behalf of a post-secular reclaiming of meaning, to insist on a «cooperative translation of religious arguments,»<sup>88</sup> or, as the governments of Ecuador and Bolivia have done, to enshrine *sumak kawsay*<sup>89</sup> as a state objective in the constitution, this person must in Occidentalized contexts overcome the shame that the Platonic Socrates once instilled in his men friends: of lamenting the shame of the destruction of the good life here and now in a «womanish,» therefore «unreasonable» way, like Xanthippe, instead of being fobbed off with a better invisible afterlife, however it may be defined.

## 1.10 Post-dualistic beginnings and the return of the question of meaning to the public sphere

That the dichotomous order is currently being clearly confounded—for the moment including the first Black president of the USA and the first women serving as chancellor and secretary of defense in Germany—is therefore a sign of hope, not in the first instance for reasons of justice, but rather, above all, as regards the potential post-dualistic significance of non-white, non-male persons in positions of power. Perhaps the historical narrative will one day explain the chancellor's lasting great popularity, which can hardly be «rationally» explained, less with helplessness and disorientation than with a latent «hunger for meaning.»<sup>90</sup> Is the hope for more effective femininity the

85 See on this the characterization of the child as a «newcomer» in Hannah Arendt 1958, chapters 19-27, and Hans Saner 1977.

86 Jürgen Habermas 2003, 114.

87 Ibid. 110.

88 Ibid. 109.

89 *Sumak kawsay*, a core ethical principle of the Andean cultures, can be translated approximately as 'living together well' or 'collective well-being.' On this see Anna Findl-Ludescher et al. 2012 and Chap. 4.9 of this essay.

90 Ulrike Wagener et al. 1999.

expression of a wish for politics that once again places the question of the meaning of the whole in the public sphere?

By now, it will have become clear that the essentialist claim that because of her sex Angela Merkel or because of his skin color Barack Obama is truly more capable of a meaningful political and economic reorientation than their white male predecessors is not at issue here. In fact, both continue to tout measures, often in a habitus of significant and hopeful disorientation,<sup>91</sup> that move in continuity with the practiced subjugation of the political to the market mechanism that is ostensibly without alternatives. What causes hope is not the illusion laid out in the dichotomous order that women or people of color as an almost natural representation of private endowment of life are particularly capable of realigning the political so that it is more oriented towards meaning. Instead, precisely the destruction of this illusion opens up the horizon for new beginnings. What makes us hopeful is not in fact the supposedly natural differences among sexes, ethnicities or cultures, and the corresponding delegations of the question of meaning, but rather the liberatingly incalculable potential unleashed by breaking up the dichotomous symbolic order and the associated allocations: children today grow up with the perception that knowledge, reason, and power are not linked per se with maleness and being white, and instilling emotion and the private endowment of life with meaning are not linked to femaleness and people of color. Instead, it has become natural for a woman or person of color to publicly exercise creative power with all the disjointedness, contradictions and corruptibility that, at least in the short term, cannot be separated from the individual offices. With this, the arrangement of a political mechanics that is immune to meaning and of a creation of meaning (seemingly) guaranteed in feminine/religious/unenlightened private spheres collapses, which means that the question of meaning reappears in the public sphere: What *does it mean* actually, or what should it mean that seven—and soon more—billion human bearers of dignity are inhabiting the fragile living space of earth together with countless other living beings<sup>92</sup> and are wishing for a good life, also for future generations?

No longer does each individual decide at home alone about the answer to this question on the basis of contingent, for instance religious, preferences, and no longer can anyone delegate the answer to a «lifeworld» or exotic paradises in which, ostensibly, completely different rules apply: love not profit, charity not calculation, donation not exchange, ethics not economism. The question of the meaning of the whole is thus, by necessity, becoming the subject of public debate again. That at the present time such debates are repeatedly initiated by the terrorist attacks of young people who, in the vacuum of meaning, have become susceptible to pseudo-religious, hyper-dualistic hatred of everything «Western» is tragic, but not devoid of a certain historical logic. In positive terms, the new post-dualist freedom to understand and claim politics once again as a form of creating meaning, which concerns everyone and for which all are responsible, will be far more important in the long term than

<sup>91</sup> Andrea Günter 2008.

<sup>92</sup> On the dignity of the non-human creature see Chap. 4.10 of this essay.

the question of what political actions this specific Chancellor Angela Merkel and that President Barack Obama have carried out here and now.

## 1.11 Economy and ecology

Considered etymologically, the terms «economy» and «ecology» are closely related: both refer to the *oikos*, the household, the community household, the world household;<sup>93</sup> both are concerned with the regularities of keeping house. There is a significant difference, however, between -nomy and -logy, *nomos* and *logos*: *nomos* refers to man-made rule and agreement, while *logos* refers to divine law, or, in more modern terms: natural law, world reason, philosophy, the meaning of everything. It is no coincidence that the famous prologue of the Gospel according to John says *logos*, ambiguously translated in the traditional Bible translations as «the Word,» is the beginning of all things:

In the beginning was the Word (*logos*),  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

In the beginning was Wisdom (*logos*),  
and Wisdom was with God, and Wisdom was like God.

(John 1:1 in the BigS translation)<sup>94</sup>

The translation could also be carried out with the philological and theological authority of Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:

In the beginning there was Thought (*logos*),<sup>95</sup>  
and Thought was with God. And [the ultimate concern] was Thought.<sup>96</sup>

(John 1:1)

As a consequence of this crucial difference, there is the potential in *ecology* as a political force to bind the economy to its intended purpose: the satisfaction of the needs of all seven—and soon more—billion human bearers of dignity who inhabit the fragile living space of earth together with countless other living beings must be reorganized so that this complex and symbiotic coexistence remains possible into the future, too.

It is no coincidence that the ecological movement arose in the context of what used to be called «conservation of nature.» Both initiatives involve, in essence,

<sup>93</sup> Ina Praetorius 2002.

<sup>94</sup> This is the translator's version of the German alternative. BigS is the abbreviation of an initiative called *Bibel in gerechter Sprache* (a translation of the Bible in unbiased language). See [www.bibel-in-gerechter-sprache.de/das-projekt/bibel-in-gerechter-sprache-e-v/](http://www.bibel-in-gerechter-sprache.de/das-projekt/bibel-in-gerechter-sprache-e-v/).

<sup>95</sup> See Johann Wolfgang von Goethe 2005, 43.

<sup>96</sup> The theologian Paul Tillich calls God «the ultimate concern.» See Paul Tillich 1966.



reminding the economy—or what is wrongly called this today—of its original task from the boundaries of the natural. What we call «nature,» however, has two sides, as has become clear in the meantime: on the one hand, nature is the material substrate of all human being, doing, thinking and economic activity, which is why the destruction of the natural is inevitably accompanied by the destruction of the human. On the other hand, guided by interest in leading as «free» a life as possible, a life unhampered by the needs and tribulations of the inalterable naturalness of all human existence, people have again and again defined certain people and spheres as part of «nature.» While Plato and Aristotle still openly provided information about the wish of (supposedly) free *polis* citizens to organize the satisfaction of their needs shaped by feudal domination by delegating them «downwards,» the identification of certain human activities with nature develops over time into the implied precondition of all economic thinking.

Meanwhile, this implicit understanding of the dichotomous order has far-reaching consequences for the organization of the whole: the course was already set when Adam Smith, the founding father of economic liberalism, summarily reduced labor and the division of labor, on the first pages of his influential work, *The Wealth of Nations*, to those areas of society that are organized in «manufactures» (in contemporary English: «sectors of the economy»):

The greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour, and the greater part of the skill, dexterity, and judgment with which it is anywhere directed, or applied, seem to have been the effects of the division of labour. The effects of the division of labour, in the general business of society, will be more easily understood, by considering in what manner it operates in some particular manufactures...<sup>97</sup>

In the lifetime of the professorial lord of the manor and paterfamilias Smith, a large part of the labor was already organized not in the form of monetized transactions, thus not in «manufactures» (this remains the case to the present day), but rather carried out without payment and thus without the financial incentives ostensibly indispensable as motivation to work in the «lifeworld.» Following Smith and other «classics of economic thinking,»<sup>98</sup> this lifeworld is conceived, sentimentalized, made into part of nature, and trivialized as external to the system right up to the present day. It is precisely the work without which economic activity makes no sense, inasmuch as it provides and restores, again and again, the *raison d'être* of all economic activity: human beings who consume and produce.

Thus, to remind the economy of its self-imposed purpose from the point of view of bounded, fragile nature means two things: focusing again on the material substrate of all human existence, and making visible those hands, spheres, people, and activities that have been trivialized into «nature» and thus *made* invisible, and rethinking them

<sup>97</sup> Adam Smith 1978 (1789), 11 (emphasis I.P.).

<sup>98</sup> Heinz D. Kurz (ed.) 2008.



as the *center of all economic activity*: environmental and social policy are inextricably causally linked, and economics needs to again place at its center what it has defined as its center: «satisfying the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life.»

## 2 Separatisms, integrations and denial

The dissolution of the dichotomous order has been going on globally for a long time, although not in the form of a compact political program to which there can be complete commitment or which can be voted on every four years. A complex interaction between undeniable ecological pressures, technological innovations, symbolic deconstruction in various post-movements of thought, transdisciplinary experiments in the spaces between politics, art, science, religion, and more,<sup>99</sup> policies of equal opportunity, auto-destructive system crises, tentative and only loosely connected new forms of coexistence, and «managing like a woman innkeeper»<sup>100</sup> and more or less coincidental historical events, has led to a situation that is both confusing and inspiring. The expression «I no longer know what is up and what is down» translates what is going on globally into terms understandable by all: the supposedly natural order of the hierarchical, complementary binary conception of gender is inexorably disintegrating<sup>101</sup> with the same logic as the associated hierarchizations that used to be unquestionable between belief and knowledge, subject and object, *res cogitans* and *res extensa*, colonizer and colony, center and periphery, God and the world, culture and nature, public and private spheres.

But there are also massive forces—who would expect otherwise?—resisting the transformation to a post-dualistic order: corporations work with market power to maintain or stage ever more profitable pink and blue or black and white stereotypes, media and «normal science»<sup>102</sup> prevent collective reflection by systematically channeling attention to matters of secondary importance, or reissuing adopted dichotomies. And there are wrong paths of resistance that predictably lead to dead ends because they only turn hierarchies upside down rather than deconstructing the order as a whole, because they wear themselves out in repetitive outrage, unproductive hostile stances, and their own assumed powerlessness, or look for isolated liberation for specific individuals or groups where only the deconstruction of the dichotomous order as a whole would help.

<sup>99</sup> See Andreas Weber 2013, Sacha Kagan 2012.

<sup>100</sup> See Article «Wirtinschaft» in Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 146-148. Adding «in» to the middle of the term *Wirtschaft* (which means both economy and inn) creates a new feminine term for both concepts.

<sup>101</sup> Characteristic in this context: the comment of the transsexual winner of the European Song Contest 2014 Conchita Wurst about winning: «We are unstoppable!»

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Kuhn 1970, passim.

In this second chapter, therefore, I will address the question of what forms of resistance to exclusion are being practiced, how productive they are, and whether they can be combined to form a coherent policy.

## 2.1 Simplifying the (intentionally) complicated: schematic reductions

Admittedly, an intellectual ambition from behind your desk to transfer the post-confusion<sup>103</sup> into an efficient program to end the dichotomous order is superfluous. A harmonized «strategy,» which some may be expecting here, would not do justice to the irrepressible confusion of transformations already under way. Instead, it would run the risk of reverting into a mechanistic illusion, because taking leave from the «obsession with smooth functioning»<sup>104</sup> is in fact a promising solution approach.

Explicitly no longer wanting to know what is up and what is down, does not mean, however, rejecting the greatest possible analytical clarity as a simplification in and of itself. For this reason, in this chapter I will even risk attempting schematic representations of complex relationships. These are of course to be taken with a grain of salt. But sometimes simplifications are helpful, namely when they provide you with an overview, where, as in this case, complexity is found not only in the subject matter itself, but has been orchestrated again and again in the sense of a *divide et impera*. I am convinced that the deconstruction of the dichotomous order will in the final analysis serve everyone. But in each specific case there are almost always substantial interests opposing it: Who would be interested in a coherent resistance of the excluded against the tremendously versatile authoritative hereafter, in view of the extent to which these interests profit from such varied people, things and conditions as migrants, housewives, feelings, material, animals, «foreign» ethnicities, and people's own physicality being considered a part of nature? Are people who may not be «at the top» of the order that is disintegrating but are nonetheless above others, for instance men of non-Occidentalized ethnicities, prepared to join the battles for equal opportunity of those who are subordinate to them, in this case women of these same ethnicities, where the order nevertheless still allows men of non-Occidentalized ethnicities to compel these women to serve their own persons? Won't they be more inclined to resist the end of the order in their own short-term interest? And how does one explain to a feminist that, if she wants to pursue a career and—among other things for that very reason—demands a fifty-percent proportion of women in armies and supervisory boards, she should at the same time choose to see herself as part of the natural world such as glaciers and oceans? And with men who are trying to escape from the domination of the dichotomous order through non-patriarchal or less patriarchal indigenous explanations of the world?<sup>105</sup> It seems to me one can actually best

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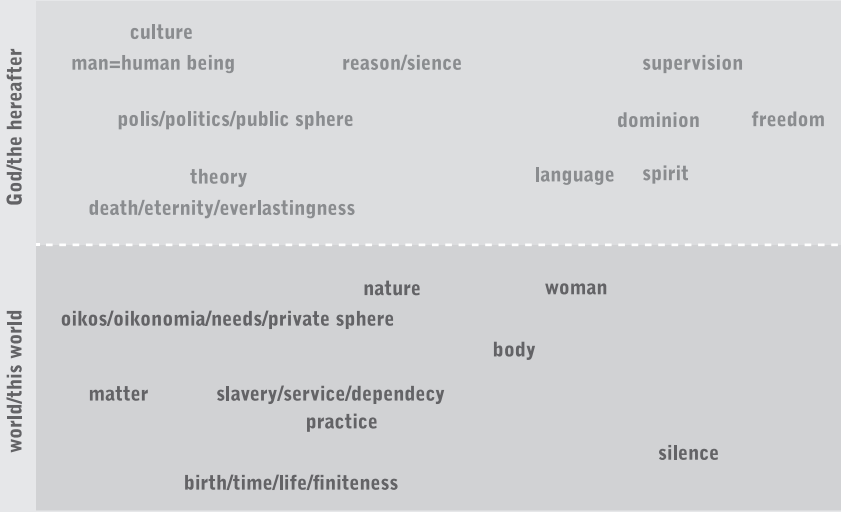
103 See Chapter 3.1 of this essay.

104 Hannah Arendt 1998, 214.

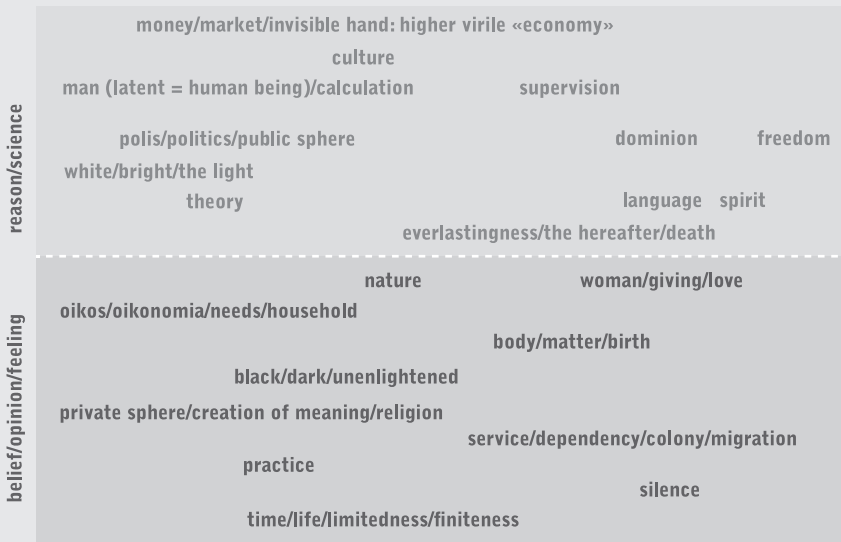
105 On this see Chap. 4.9 of this essay.

explain it to all parties involved—and this is ultimately necessary, particularly to the very busy makers of resistance politics—using a simplified diagram:

**Fig. 1: The dichotomous symbolic order: the pre-modern model**



**Fig. 2: The dichotomous symbolic order: the modern adaptation**



In order to approximate the confusing inextricability of flexible orders of domination and subordination in reductive two-dimensionality, I have mixed up the pairs that only seemingly belong together eternally: the dichotomies that define and reinforce each other are not properly arranged in conceptual conjugal beds in my diagram, but rather in nearly as confused a way as they seem in reality. In the order that is dying away, «man» has always behaved to «woman» *only approximately* like the master to the slave, like spirit to body, like culture to nature, like public to private, like bright to dark, which is why until the present day people have again and again succeeded in separating the excluded from each other: people have invented countless «distinctions»<sup>106</sup> that one could argue about for centuries if this were desired. Even at the very beginning, Aristotle raised the issue of some of these differences in some detail, thus supplying the model for never-ending debates that skillfully steer clear of the essentials, namely that—up to the present day—these are profitable «naturalizations» of the human in every individual case:

the first and least parts of a family are master and slave, husband and wife, father and children.... We therefore must consider what each of these three relations is and ought to be: I mean the relation of master and servant, of husband and wife, and thirdly of parent and child. ... There are many kinds both of rulers and subjects...<sup>107</sup> But the kind of rule differs; the freeman rules over the slave after another manner from that in which the male rules over the female, or the man over the child; although the parts of the soul are present in all of them, they are present in different degrees. For the slave has no deliberative faculty at all; the woman has, but it is without authority, and the child has but it is immature.<sup>108</sup>

To offer resistance to the conglomerate of dichotomies continuously adapted to different circumstances, ways of thought, and needs, there are three strategic possibilities, once again schematically reduced: inversion, integration, and denial. All three strategic possibilities are practiced in a multitude of forms that often overlap, of which only a few will be shown here by way of example. The purpose of the following sections is to show that all these forms of resistance have their own limited justification, but that they come more clearly into focus, and thus are more effective, when understood (anew) in the scope of a comprehensive deconstruction of the dichotomous order.

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106 Pierre Bourdieu 1984.

107 Aristotle 2005, 31-32.

108 Ibid. 52.

## 2.2 Separatist inversions: matriarchy – wildness – négritude...

In the beginning was power.  
And the power was feminine and omnipresent.

It resided within us and in all things. It created the inherent order,  
the rhythms of life and decay, high and low tide, sunrise and sunset.

The power of the feminine surrounded us on all sides. It was the space in  
which we lived, the earth that bore us, the cave that protected us, the house  
that rescued us, the vault of heaven above us.<sup>109</sup>

Texts like this one, with which Gerda Weiler begins her large-scale study on *The hidden matriarchy in the Old Testament*, fascinated many women in the 1980s—and not without reason. A reality is conceptualized (supposedly) *completely different* from the one experienced on a daily basis: both pre-historical paradise and the utopia being aspired toward, a powerful concept of identity beyond feminine servitude, and (a vague) orientation for transformational action. In fact, the matriarchy movement at the end of the 20th century with its theory circles, ritual groups, and social experiments opened up spaces that, by distancing women from apparently eternally valid ascriptions, have achieved a great deal: the alternative concept of identity of an «integrating, all-embracing matriarchal abundance of power»<sup>110</sup> has considerable potential for empowerment, even if it ultimately turns out to be an illusory inversion of what has been opposed. Although the architects of a pre-historical, pre-linguistic, pre-dualistic matriarchy that evolves into the benchmark of political action tried very hard to rescue their blueprints from the trap of a mere inversion of traditional dichotomies:

We must ... leave patriarchal terminology behind to sense that the matriarchal «mistress» does not lay claim to any «[mister] domination.» The queen of heaven did not exercise any artificial power. Her strength flowed from within. She was the quintessence of all vital forces, the creative primal force. Originally she alone was venerated. She was the mistress and no one else.<sup>111</sup>

When, however, the practiced «higher male» is countered with a concept of all-embracing femaleness, in other words, if a binary conception of gender survives as a frame of reference, and classical attributes of the «higher» such as sole veneration, origin, or creative power are merely shifted from a male to a female principle to which a dependent male «heros» or «son»<sup>112</sup> is then subordinated, the misunderstanding

109 Gerda Weiler 1983, 21.

110 Ibid. 22.

111 Ibid. The German includes the play on words *Herrin* and *Herrschaft* (the latter German term, meaning rule or domination or control, includes the word stem Herr for «mister»).

112 Ibid. 127-143 and *passim*.

that this is just an inversion of patriarchal conditions is difficult to avoid, despite the willingness to «sense» what is completely different:

In the women's movement, because the models presented in numerous variants of a higher or better femaleness were intuitive, holistic, maternal, and—this time in a positive sense—close to nature, they clashed in significant debates with concepts of liberation that demanded a realistic analysis of the «complicity»<sup>113</sup> of women: When the American psychologist Carol Gilligan founded the ethics of care in the early 1980s with her book «In a Different Voice»<sup>114</sup> and in the process did not clearly avoid an idealistic equation of femaleness with empathy and care, the Berlin social scientist Christina Thürmer-Rohr reacted with fierce criticism:

We cannot simply say: Patriarchy has turned out to be a form of society whose predominant members, men, saw as valuable something that turned out not to be valuable. Therefore we women are finally taking our different morality out of the closet, setting the priorities ourselves, replacing and occupying the empty spaces. I see this fine challenge as an ahistorical illusion. For we cannot rush into unoccupied territory; such territory doesn't exist. Besides, we have nothing in our possession, or not enough, with which to occupy this non-existent place ... in a completely different, brand new way.<sup>115</sup>

One year after the Chernobyl disaster, in February 1987, a women's group close to the Green Party adopted the «Mothers' Manifesto»,<sup>116</sup> that, linking to the concept of a femaleness reduced to biological motherhood—and thus ostensibly per se environmentally sensitive—was intended to encourage «a new debate about an expanded, ecological, forward-looking concept of emancipation.» The answer came immediately in the form of a «Mamalogy» issue of the journal «beiträge zur feministischen theorie und praxis,» in which «the new ideology of mothers»<sup>117</sup> was debunked as ahistorical and reactionary.

There were structurally comparable debates in the 20th century around concepts like «négritude,» «Blackness,» and «wildness,» whose protagonists, although with a less sweeping claim, attempted to address exclusions as being part of nature with constructs of something «completely different» which was untrammelled or even pristine: African and Afro-American intellectuals rallied around terms such as «négritude» and «Blackness» in the first half of the last century to counter the colonialist ascription that Africa was uncultured against the idea of a distinct culture centered around values such as sensuality, intuition, and a positively understood closeness to nature. Structurally comparable, the concept of «wildness» established itself as an alternative concept to the man-made cultural landscape. The basis of the nature conservation movement is that it seeks to rescue natural reserves or natural parks from human

113 Christina Thürmer-Rohr 1992, 43-46. [slight modifications by this translator]

114 Carol Gilligan 1982.

115 Christina Thürmer-Rohr, 104.

116 Mamalogie 1988, 201-207.

117 Ibid. 5.

exploitation and leave them «untouched.» In these cases too, critics argued that claiming autonomous areas lying outside the hegemonic power (of definition) was merely mythology and not suitable for serious consideration as a theoretical basis of politics.

Even if such criticism is directed at the weak point of outside worlds that have supposedly remained intact by being ahistorical, it does not do justice to the potential for renewal of utopian thinking, particularly when the criticism leads to nothing other than the supposed lack of alternatives to an integration of women, non-Occidentalized ethnicities, and nature into the ruling paradigm. In his critical reading of the currently dominant model of an economization of nature, Thomas Fatheuer has plausibly demonstrated this two-facedness of criticism of utopia: It is indeed right to criticize ideas of pristine nature as ahistorical ideology; but to allow this justified criticism to be turned into a defamation of all those who see third ways between the myth of «wildness» and the utter economization of the natural, for instance a pragmatic connection to the idea of nature conservation and corresponding regulatory concepts such as protected areas, bans, or taxes as being obsolete, would not serve the cause but rather would ultimately direct money to follow fashionable argumentation rather than move such money in the right direction.<sup>118</sup>

Othmar Keel, scholar of ancient Near Eastern studies, shows that utopian energies can also be constructively assimilated and transformed: he does not confirm the hypothesis of a pre-historical matriarchy, but acknowledges its fruitfulness as a stimulus for exploring antiquity that is less guided by preconceptions:

Even if the de-deification of the environment and shared world has not, as so often claimed, justified its rampant exploitability, it has led to a reduced sensitivity to the demands and the life of nature. Authors such as Heide Göttner-Abendroth and Gerda Weiler have strongly and correctly felt the loss suffered by suppressing the Canaanite, even if their historical reconstructions are for the most part untenable.<sup>119</sup>

### **2.3 Types of integration: equality—aid programs—monetization**

While the schemes of a self-regulated and better alternative model and the related experiments based on practical life skills remain restricted to small but quite subversively effective groups, state policies on the issue of how to deal with «those discriminated against» and the «environment» are primarily based on the principle of the integration of (ostensibly) deficient areas and groups into the dichotomous order: girls from the lower classes or «female immigrants to the industrialized countries» should enjoy the same educational and career opportunities; successful «climbers» are acclaimed as exemplary; «career women» who have a good grip on their «work-life balance» are deemed the standard; «career obstacles» are eliminated through

<sup>118</sup> See Thomas Fatheuer 2013, 60-66.

<sup>119</sup> Othmar Keel in Thomas Staubli 2005, 20.



measures such as continuing further training, family allowances, external child care and paternity leaves; it is recommended that the care sector be transformed into paid services as comprehensively as possible;<sup>120</sup> human beings become «human capital,» nature becomes «natural capital,» rainforests «ecosystem service providers.»<sup>121</sup>

If the relevant «equality measures» do not take effect as desired, media discourse promptly declares them—and not without good reason—illusionary: books that revert triumphantly to apparently tried and tested ascriptions and announce the end of emancipation, multiculturalism, or environmentalism become bestsellers. Transformative experiments in intercultural life, environmentally responsible lifestyle, shared parenting, or queerness<sup>122</sup> are defamed as elitist minority phenomena, and a return to traditional role models—that is to say: practices of exclusion—again appears to be the only realistic or reasonable solution.

In fact, the «equal treatment» of the excluded, understood as an isolated practice or even an ideal path to liberation, cannot have a comprehensive effect in terms of good coexistence of everyone for a simple reason: the volume of work previously done by people ostensibly closer to nature in spheres considered part of nature does not disappear if the questionable privilege of letting some of those who were previously excluded, for instance white middle-class women or migrants of the professional class, ascend to «higher» spheres is conceded. And nature, both human and non-human, remains bounded, fragile, and linked to contexts that are not interchangeable, even if it is theoretically possible to force them into standardized calculations or systems of justice. It is true that limited progress in efficiency and productivity has been made not only in the production of goods, but definitely also in the service and caregiving sectors, and in the consumption of natural resources. This may be gratifying, but it also nurtures the illusion that the natural and cultural fabric of relations that has arisen over centuries or even millennia can be evaluated, exchanged and compensated using globalized measurements or even a single metric—the dollar—without the actual quality of life getting lost in the shuffle.<sup>123</sup>

Children, for instance, still cannot be fabricated by machines. The transformation of human newcomers—apparently without any alternative—into marketable human capital pushes the limits of real quality of life and human dignity, as does the proposal to hand over the care of aging and sick people to robots. Rather more than less of a strain is put on nature itself—both human and non-human—through globally organized increases in efficiency, the increased use of technology, compressed working—in other words: stress, and increased exploitative pressure. As a consequence, new exclusions are developing based on the old model: immigrants from Eastern Europe, Southeast Asia, and Africa care for Western European senior citizens for the lowest of

**120** On this see Christa Wichterich 2000, 39-57; Ina Praetorius 2014, 108-11.

**121** Thomas Fatheuer 2013, 24, 41-57.

**122** On this see Chapter 4.11 of this essay.

**123** There are systematic parallels between the economization of nature and the monetization of providing care; Christa Wichterich (2009) addressed their actual form and consequences as «paradoxes» of globalized equal opportunity policies. They urgently need to be developed further.

wages, bring up «career» women’s children, keep their households in order, and pander to stressed-out managers. An economic war over cheap food and raw materials is under way on the African continent—these continue to be in large part cultivated, harvested, and mined by children, youth, or unprotected casual laborers beyond human rights standards. And until the present day the new definition of nature as an «ecosystem service» has not, despite high expectations, led to a real end to the unchecked exploitation of natural resources. Quite the contrary: the concept of integrating nature into globalized trade relations as a service stokes the illusion that it is at the unlimited disposal of at least those who, through complementary compensation payments, can delegate their responsibility «downwards.»<sup>124</sup>

The inverted model and the integration or equality model are shown in simple graphics in Figures 3 and 4:

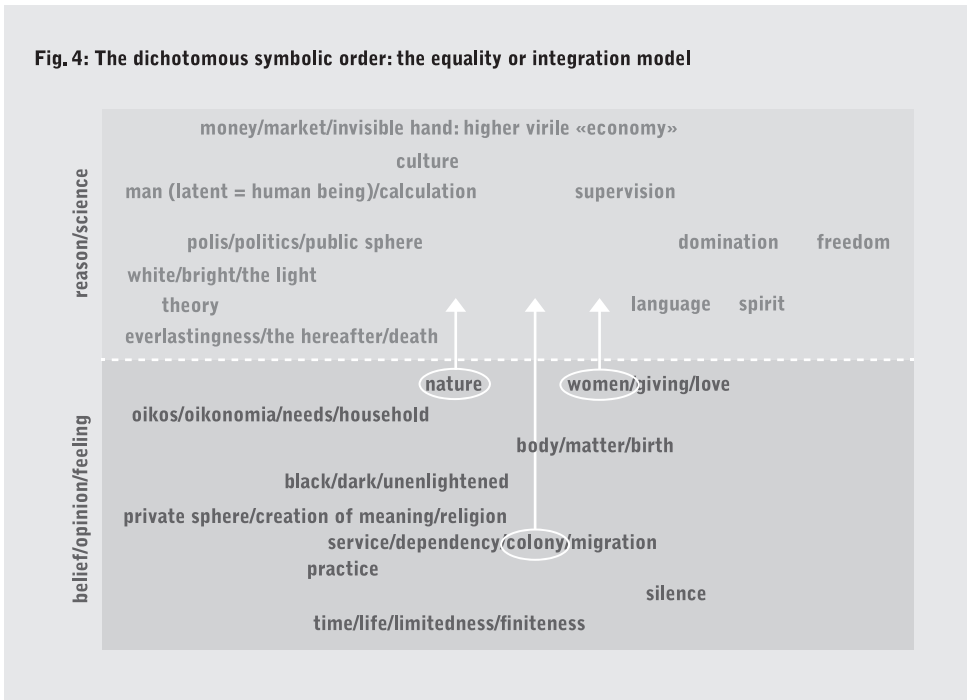
**Fig. 3: The dichotomous symbolic order: the reverse matriarchal model**



Concerning those areas of human culture made part of nature, equal opportunity policies are based on the illusion that individuals or groups can be allowed to «climb» up from the lower rungs of the order into the supposedly more attractive virile spheres without the dichotomous order being seriously destabilized as a consequence. Ultimately, however, the result of this is nothing other than more and more concentration of power and resources on the «higher» rungs, increasing impoverishment and (self-) destruction in the «lower» rungs—and a growing loss of meaning for everyone: why

124 Thomas Fatheuer 2013, 62-66.

**Fig. 4: The dichotomous symbolic order: the equality or integration model**



should I as a woman enjoy «equal rights» if, at the place to which equal opportunity transports me, nothing awaits me beyond the standard laid down by men, stress, and dependency on money and my boss rather than on my husband? What is happiness worth if it consists of rising stock prices and residential fortresses armed with alarm systems? Is equality—beyond the equal right to life and the free development of your personality codified in declarations of human rights and constitutions—even a value that it makes sense to aspire to? What do wealth and career mean in a ruined world?

## 2.4 Refusal: from deception to un-deception

In the mid-1980s, in the context of the broad movement against the nuclear arms race, Christina Thürmer-Rohr sounded a rally cry for many women with her call to radically cease providing service and then face up to personal complicity and confront the confusion:

The fact that men in power have achieved the possibility of ... annihilation sends us into a fatally delayed tailspin. Women have failed. We cannot relieve ourselves of the consequence which an acknowledgement of this failure must bring: namely, the risk of total uncertainty. All self-evident truths have come to an end, along with all reliable categories of understanding. ... With the questions that arise, we cannot cling to our current systems of meaning ... not even if the consequence is confusion. For it is possible that all new thoughts

initially produce more confusion than light; and perhaps it really is just a matter of seeing clearly, of becoming more keenly aware, and of no longer hoping.<sup>125</sup>

The pathos of total refusal soon wore thin because, like equal opportunity policy, it isolates women as a resistant group from other excluded groups, and in so doing tends to make absolute the battle between the sexes, and because it fails in practical life as a bottomless defensive attitude. Nonetheless, the hypothesis that *all* traditional forms of resistance had failed to set in motion a process of setting things in order—or can do so today. It became clear: «complementary ideas» like victim discourses, accepting «offers of equality» (Thürmer-Rohr, 44), and escape to ideal counterworlds have moved in equal measure within the framework of the defined dichotomous order which they submit to, against which they are in opposition or which they invert. For that reason, «our only way is out of deception to un-deception» (Thürmer-Rohr, 62):

There is no way around the need to see clearly, without cheating, and to renounce all illusions. The strength produced by illusions is a miserable crutch; it leads to despair and self-contempt. ... We must radically reject every superficial consolation. If women were finally to become nihilists in this sense, it would be a revolutionary act. (Thürmer-Rohr, 62)

To become nihilistic in the «superficial» sense intended here does not mean, however, to believe in nothing any more; instead, it means

we ought now to hold onto what is certain. We should equip ourselves for this life. It is irreplaceable. And if we revolt against the scandal being perpetrated on this earth, let it be for only one reason: because life still contains uncontaminated moments. ... The most reliable resistance comes from the ability to live—unreconciled with our self-justifications, and unreconciled with our complicity. (Thürmer-Rohr, 63)

This orientation towards the here and now as the «irreplaceable» reminds us of Xanthippe's refusal to place an invisible, supposedly real life above the visible and tangible «natal» and mortal life. It leads back to the beginning of the history of the dichotomous world—and thus to the decision that it is still possible to declare the dichotomous order void *as such*: it is in fact not yet true even today that an invisible hereafter of whatever kind is more important than visible life here and now. It is not true that women, migrants, and people somewhere far away are intended through their unvalued or undervalued work to maintain the illusion that the market will automatically adjust itself by means of an «invisible hand.» It is a lie to claim that the deep-rooted way of thinking of the relationships among people as hierarchies and certain people as removed from nature has led to «satisfy[ing] the human need to

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125 Christina Thürmer-Rohr 1992, 40-41. (The page numbers in parentheses in 2.4 refer to this text).

preserve and sustain life and the quality of life»<sup>126</sup> or will ever lead to that. Finally, it is also not true that women and people of color are the better, more meaningful people, who in pre-historic times exercised good power that was «no [mister] domination.»<sup>127</sup> The excluded *do not* provide a reservoir of meaning to which it is possible to flee after work or on holiday, when the stress of simulating a future life better for everyone becomes unbearable. And everything proposed to counter the prevailing order collapses in on itself if the order it is directed against disintegrates.

Consenting to the breakdown of the dichotomous world does not end in nihilistic refusal, but rather results in patient, peaceful work on a different paradigm.

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**126** Peter Ulrich 2008, 1. See note 2.

**127** See note 111.

### 3 From post-dichotomous *Durcheinander* to a different paradigm

The beautiful German word *Durcheinander* (meaning a jumbled mess—literally: «through one another») has not yet been burdened by the linguistic acrobatics of science. The authors of the *ABC des guten Lebens* («ABC of the good life») selected this word in 2012 to describe conditions during and following the collapse of the dichotomous order:

In the days of the late patriarchy ... more and more people are recognizing that the world does not necessarily have to be labeled in the way the statically dualistic order dictates. At the same time, we recognize that a better order will not emerge by itself. First, the collapse of old pseudo-certainties triggers a kind of dizziness; after all, in the post-patriarchal *Durcheinander*, we at first literally do not know what is up and what is down: Are emotions now dominating reason? Are money and profit at last no longer the center of economic activity and the object of all desires? On what will communal life concentrate if the logic of the market no longer determines everything? On the household or the state or a kind of community that does not yet have a name? ... Surrounded by the debris left behind by the collapse of the conceptual conjugal beds, how are we to say what and how something is? How do we bring new order to the concepts swirling *durcheinander*?<sup>128</sup>

Usually, *Durcheinander*, which can also be an adjective—«I am *durcheinander*»—is written as one word. In that case, it means chaos or disorder or confusion, and it triggers unease and an urge to tidy things up. It can also be written as two words: *durcheinander*. Then it describes the way in which all humans come into the world: through one another, not from the hand of an omnipotent creator and not out of thin air, but through the body of a particular person of the previous generation.<sup>129</sup> «Through one another» also describes how we make our way through the world after being born: namely by referring to one another; listening to, learning from, and cooperating with one another; by discovering and trying out ways to solve problems through one another, perhaps we find escape from the *Durcheinander* that the collapse of the

<sup>128</sup> Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 9f (emphases I. P.).

<sup>129</sup> See Ina Praetorius 2011b.

dichotomous order left behind. Finally, *Durcheinander* can also be written as three words: *durch ein Ander*, even if that version is not completely correct grammatically. Then it creates room in direct interpersonal relations for others not present in the here and now: for predecessors, distant contemporaries, and descendants who are also journeying toward the «good life for all worldwide»<sup>130</sup>—to non-human nature, to transcendence, to what is yet to come and has not yet been imagined and tried out.

### 3.1 *Durcheinander* and the paradigm shift

Perceiving the period at the beginning of the 21st century in this threefold way as *Durch/Ein/Ander* is reminiscent of how in his theory of the paradigm shift<sup>131</sup> the philosopher of science Thomas Kuhn described the period preceding the breakthrough of a new paradigm:

Political revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created. In much the same way, scientific revolutions are inaugurated by a growing sense, again often restricted to a narrow subdivision of the scientific community, that an existing paradigm has ceased to function adequately in the exploration of an aspect of nature to which that paradigm itself had previously led the way. In both political and scientific development the sense of malfunction that can lead to crisis is prerequisite to revolution. (Kuhn 1970, 92)

Like artists, creative scientists must occasionally be able to live in a world out of joint ... (Kuhn 1970, 79)

It has become customary to extend Kuhn's concept of the paradigm shift, which originally referred to the transformation of scientific explanatory models in the narrower sense, to phenomena that are not scientific in nature: today, people often also speak of a paradigm shift when everyday notions of how the world works change fundamentally. It is in this broad sense that I will describe in the following the period of the post-patriarchal *Durcheinander* in dialogue with Kuhn's now popular intellectual approach—in the enlarged second edition of 1970—thus addressing the question as to which policy is appropriate for this period.

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130 See note 73.

131 Thomas Kuhn 1970. The page numbers in parentheses in chapters 3 and 4 refer to this work.

## 3.2 The necessary re-centering of the economy

I have asked quite a few economists why they customarily exclude half the activities and «resources to satisfy human needs»<sup>132</sup> from their field of study. Their response was usually that after all, they could not and did not seek to monetize life in its entirety. Where would that end—in terms of human relations—if all the services provided in private relationships and households—giving birth, nursing babies, consoling, sex, listening, etc.—were or should be charged and paid for? They conceded that the US economist Gary Becker (1930-2014) had attempted to do precisely this by studying decisions made in private life—marriage, divorce, the desire to have children, altruism, etc.—employing the criterion of individual utility maximization and had even received the Nobel Prize in Economics in 1992 for his «new home economics» into the context of which the now customary concept of «human capital» is to be placed. But this intellectual and research approach, they claimed, had for good reason not found its way into mainstream economics.

Yet this answer, as moral as its intent may be, merely draws attention even more clearly to the problem to which it is responding: The «normal science» (Kuhn 1970, *passim*) economics, as it has been conducted (up until) today, revolves so obsessively around money that it does not even consider the possibility that it could perceive other activities which satisfy human needs besides the analysis of «sectors of the economy»<sup>133</sup> and that its own view, narrowed by monetization, could be broadened in order to study such activities scientifically. By including from the outset only «what makes money»<sup>134</sup> or can at least be expressed in terms of money in their subject area, modern economists fall into the trap of a fateful circular argument: the object of economics is exclusively what can be translated into monetary terms; there can as a consequence be no satisfaction of human needs that cannot be expressed in terms of money. In this way, the normal science of economics systematically fails to consider half of what it itself has defined as its subject area. Strictly speaking, it is continuing, in a curiously unscientific way, on the path of the centuries-old conventional notion that what is done in the private sphere is «different,» and that it obeys pre- or extra-economic laws: love in place of money, care in place of calculation, giving in place of exchange.

Now, including in economic analyses work performed in private households without (direct) financial incentives by no means implies *per se* monetizing all of life, at least not if the unfounded, usually implicit prerequisite that money is at the center of economics and is its only metric—and this contradicts the definition—is dropped. Why should it follow from the decision to include unpaid work to satisfy human needs by definition in economic analyses that it must also be included in the established monetary calculation methods, which are by no means the only imaginable ones, or even in the supposedly only possible mechanism for rewarding work, namely «money

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132 See note 1.

133 See note 56.

134 See Silvia Kontos, Karina Walser 1979.



for work»? Other models of rewarding work have been practiced for a long time or planned for the future, for example forms of mutual, non-monetary acknowledgment, or various approaches to an unconditional basic income, but their appropriateness can only be tested if economists decide to broaden the object of their studies accordingly. In any case, it does not follow from what economists do not *desire*, perhaps for good reason which needs to be examined—namely reducing all aspects of life to amounts of money—that all the services provided to satisfy human needs could not become the object of that science whose task is to study how the «resources for satisfying human needs can be most effectively produced, distributed, and used or consumed.»<sup>135</sup>

In other words, the question is: how can there continue to be a science of the satisfaction of needs on the basis of the division of labor, a science of economics, that does not force us to settle for the dreadful reductionisms of real-world economics, which according to Aristotle would be more aptly termed *chrematistics*? Should the theory and study of the satisfaction of needs organized in a non-monetary manner be «relegated to another science» (Kuhn 1970, 103), for example to nursing sciences, to home economics,<sup>136</sup> which already exists, but is marginalized and underfunded in academia, or to a new, subordinate area of specialization, namely care economics? Would it not be more logical to expand the object of *oikonomia* to such an extent that it would (again) fit into the broadly accepted, useful definitional framework?

Thomas Kuhn believes that accepting a new paradigm in accordance with the concession that «something has gone fundamentally wrong» (Kuhn 1970, 86) ... «often necessitates a redefinition of the corresponding science.» (ibid., 103) The case at hand here, however, is not even about a redefinition, but only about the concession, as momentous as it might be, that economics has distanced itself from its core concern and needs to return to it.

Numerous reasons support re-centering the science of economics around «satisf[ing] the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life:»<sup>137</sup>

- 1) The reorientation of economics according to its own basic definition would do away with a massive and momentous inconsistency in argumentation, and would bring economics back into harmony with itself. After all, the fact that economists cite weak reasons, or none at all, for excluding the satisfaction of needs organized in a non-monetary way, makes them vulnerable to criticism. Tradition and the rarely explicitly reflected upon assent to the dichotomous order do not suffice as a justification, no matter how counterintuitive including such activities in her scientific work may seem to the economist who continues to have her mother iron her outfit at home without payment.
- 2) In view of the increasing number of findings, such as that of the United Nations from 1980, it can no longer be assumed that an economic system and a science of

<sup>135</sup> Günter Ashauer 1973, 5. See note 1.

<sup>136</sup> See Rosemarie von Schweitzer 1991.

<sup>137</sup> Peter Ulrich 2008, 11. See note 2.

economics that focus solely on «sectors of the economy» (i.e., on earning money; in Adam Smith’s terminology: «manufactures»)<sup>138</sup> actually aim at satisfying human needs, at least if that is supposed to mean the satisfaction of the needs of *all* people. If women «represent 50 per cent of the world adult population, ... perform nearly two thirds of all working hours, receive only one tenth of the world income and own less than 1 per cent of world property»<sup>139</sup>; if we also know that poverty among women and among children are causally linked, then «something [must have] gone fundamentally wrong» (Kuhn 1970, 86)—or the supposed economists would have to specify more precisely *whose* needs their calculations refer to.

- 3) It is difficult to comprehend and even more difficult to explain to others why precisely the areas centered on the production and provision of «human capital»—and thus the *raison d’être* of the entire enterprise of the economy—are to be excluded from the scope of economics. A great deal of legitimate rage and inefficient resignation and exhaustion could be avoided if the contribution of those excluded without reason were to be explicitly recognized and studied to benefit all people.
- 4) Including the non-monetary satisfaction of needs in the science of the satisfaction of needs on the basis of the division of labor does not predetermine the way in which such work is measured—and later rewarded. Defining the work performed in private homes as economic activity (again), can mean, but does not necessarily mean, adding them to the usual, only apparently general regime of «money for work.» Instead, including unpaid activities in a science that then no longer revolves only around money can also have fruitful and pioneering repercussions on answering the question whether there really is no alternative to this reward mechanism, as is currently claimed.
- 5) A return of economics to its core concern—as practice-based theory and theory-based practice—would doubtless result in a broad restructuring of both the science of economics and the society in which it is embedded. But the fear of an initially daunting *Durch/Ein/Ander* is no reason to cling to the familiar, either, if it proves obsolete in light of the socio-ecological challenges of the present and the new paradigm holds the promise of solving problems in a better way.

### 3.3 Care as a critique of normal economics

Criticism of the declaration that certain human beings and areas of activity are a part of nature is as old as this declaration itself. Even Aristotle had to defend his idea that there are «natural slaves»<sup>140</sup> against people who thought «that the rule of a master over slaves is contrary to nature ... and being an interference with nature is therefore unjust.»<sup>141</sup> There were slave revolts in the Roman Empire and liberation movements in the colonies, and women have always found ways and means to escape from captivity

<sup>138</sup> See note 56.

<sup>139</sup> United Nations Report 1980, Part 1: Background and Framework, par. 16, p. 8.

<sup>140</sup> Aristotle 2005, 8.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* 7.

in real and metaphorical conjugal beds, for example as free artisans, vagabonds, mystics, or as members of religious orders. However, whoever withdrew from the dichotomous regime was in danger: the witch hunts of the Middle Ages and the early modern period are probably the best-known historical evidence of this. Although the Reformation did away with the holy orders as places to which women unwilling to marry could withdraw, it simultaneously promoted general education, including women's education, which ultimately led to the modern women's movements: time and again, religious, bourgeois, liberal, and proletarian women made their status of dependency and the corresponding ideological ascriptions into a scandal. Finally, «care economics» developed out of the feminist «housework debate» of the 1970s in the form of systematic research into activities and services that are performed both without pay in private homes and, as housework-like services, for too little pay in institutions such as residential care institutions, bars and restaurants, or hospitals. By now, it has gathered the knowledge required to bring about the overdue re-orientation of the economic system.

However, most care economists do not yet consider their area of expertise to be a new paradigm, but one among many subfields of economics, a new specialty struggling for or seeking acceptance by a mainstream which for its part remains basically unchallenged:

The care economy encompasses caring and providing activities to care for and raise people in private homes as well as paid care activities (in residential care facilities and hospitals) supported and paid for by the state, social insurance funds, or private-sector industry. This includes areas of paid and unpaid work in which it is still mostly women who are responsible for looking after and caring for others. Thus, feminist economics introduces the care economy as an independent category for caring activities.<sup>142</sup>

Adelheid Biesecker already conceives of the relationship between the market economy and the care economy as a pair of twins that are treated unequally in fact, but in principle have equal rights:

Economics (is generally, I.P.) understood as market economics, separated from social and ecological contexts, autonomous. Yet modern economics is more; from the outset, it is—according to my thesis—about twins, about the birth of non-identical twins of different genders: the predominantly male market economy and the female ... provider or care economy. Economic theory, however, has taken just one of them into account—the market economy, as an only child ...<sup>143</sup>

<sup>142</sup> Dagmar Vinz 2011.

<sup>143</sup> Adelheid Biesecker 2010.

I go one step further and propose conceptualizing and establishing *care as the center of a new economics oriented toward its original definition.*

### 3.4 From a narrow to a broad concept of care, or: The care-centered economy

How precisely, how narrowly, how broadly the term *care* is to be understood, a term on which the theoreticians and researchers involved are slowly coming to agree—rejecting possible alternative terms such as «housework,» «care giving,» or «reproduction»—has already been the object of extensive cross-disciplinary debates. The «ABC of the good life» presented a provisional summary of the results in 2012:

Since the 1970s ... political, philosophical, and economic alternatives which focus on life and its maintenance have been developed and discussed under the overarching term «care.» The English word «care,» which in German translation also encompasses being mindful, looking after, attending to needs, and being considerate, refers to both awareness of dependency, possession of needs, and relatedness as basic elements of the human constitution and also to concrete caring activities in a broad sense. It involves «caring for the world,» and not only by means of nursing and social-work activities or housework in the narrow sense, but also by *dedication to a cultural transformation.*<sup>144</sup>

What is decisive in this summary is not only the reference to the characteristic trans-disciplinarity of the discourses on care, which draws attention to an overarching meaning of the concept, but above all the transition from a narrow concept of the term centered around concrete activities to a broad one: attention to the marginalized, vital activities that had already characterized the debate about housework led to the conviction that the concept of care puts not only the equality or integration of certain neglected areas up for debate, but the transition to a post-dichotomous economic paradigm:

Placing care activities at the center and shaping the world from the perspective of care entails a substantial shift of familiar weightings as well as the abandonment of numerous conventional assumptions and concepts. In this way, the illusion of an independent human existence becomes obsolete. And the relevance of traditional institutions, such as the state, the market, the family, and their relationships to one another, is placed ... in a different light.<sup>145</sup>

From a practical, everyday perspective, and viewed without prejudices, it is obvious that caring activities—cooking, cleaning, doing laundry, ironing, consoling, caring for others, listening, providing meaning, ...—not only belong to the domain of economics,

<sup>144</sup> Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 37f (emphasis I. P.).

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. 38f.

but can even be more allocated to it than what the economic mainstream has been focusing on for a long time: After all, the criterion for considering products and services to be economic activity has for a long time not been the question whether needs are actually satisfied, but whether money is involved: bread, weapons, anti-aging creams, financial products, deodorants, drugs, and TV talk shows, cosmetic surgery, garbage collection, sexual intercourse, and financial consulting are all thought to be part of «economic activity,» provided they are included in the money flow. This crude simplification is driven by the assumption, elevated in the West to central dogma and probably first formulated concisely by Adam Smith, that it is not «[the benevolence] of his brethren, [but rather] their self-love,»<sup>146</sup> in other words, the individual's striving for «his own advantage [that] naturally, or rather necessarily leads [the individual] to prefer that employment [of his capital] which is most advantageous to the society.»<sup>147</sup>

However, when discussing the supposed father of economic liberalism, people usually fail to mention his limiting statement that it was not the «benevolence [of his brethren] *only*» that would result in the satisfaction of everyone's needs. Following this limitation, in his seminal work on «The Wealth of Nations,» Adam Smith embeds the market activity driven by individuals' «self-love» in extensive deliberations on necessary limiting underlying conditions: from the morals of individuals to the constitutive role of state revenues and investments. By now, the dogmatization of self-interest as the *only* driver of prosperity for all has escalated to the point of being obviously contradictory, even to the telling statement of one of the best-known Swiss economics writers in the midst of the 2009 banking crisis: Unfortunately, we economists are *forbidden* to talk about human needs.<sup>148</sup>

Now, explicitly re-centering economics around its self-defined focal point as I have proposed by no means implies, as is often too hastily concluded, seeking to negate the self-interest of individuals as one important driver, thus suspending or even demonizing market mechanisms. Of course, goods and services produced in «sectors of the economy» (or, in Adam Smith's terminology: «manufactures») based on the division of labor and traded on markets are necessary, *among other reasons* to increase the benefit for the individual. What the necessary «cultural transformation» in the direction of a care-centered economics means is a new-old setting of priorities, away from the predominance of *chrematistics* and instead on the original meaning of *oikonomia*, which will then no longer be organized according to principles of domination: the re-organization of what is today called «economics» around the core of the expanded concept of care, as in the «ABC of the good life.» This dissolves the only apparently self-evident nexus between self-interest and the satisfaction of needs, which is *not* prefigured in this way in Adam Smith's works; thus abandoning the assumption that everything that appears on a market as an object of trade is *per se* part of economic activity. In other words, re-organizing economics on the basis of the expanded concept of care means

146 Adam Smith 2008 (1789), 24.

147 Ibid. 147.

148 Werner Vontobel on the evening of November 20, 2009, at the Center for Vocational and Continuing Education Toggenburg, Wattwil, Switzerland (emphasis I. P.). See on this Ina Praetorius 2011a, 98.

doing justice again to the established criterion according to which only what satisfies human needs is regarded as economic activity. Monetized and marketized exchange is not excluded by this; however, it no longer forms the core of economic activity. It is linked back to the subordinate function of distributing surpluses which was rightly ascribed to it in the Aristotelian construction of the world; now, they must be measured by the standard of whether they actually achieve what they purport to achieve.

### 3.5 The political relevance of a paradigm shift in economics

What would it mean for global society if the economic paradigm were to topple as presented here?

The reward for the «bloomin' buzzin' confusion» (1970, 113, quoting William James), which would surely erupt at first (or has already done so), would be multi-dimensional *relaxation* in the sense of easing a centuries-old cramp: Groups of people regarded as part of nature and who for centuries have been doing the unpaid and invisible groundwork required for the market to function (which it only seems to do) would be explicitly recognized as actors relevant for the economy and as possessing human dignity in its full sense. This would resolve a great deal of justified aggression, bitterness, and resignation. Streams of attention and finances could finally be guided to places where human needs in the sense of a good life for all, including future generations, would actually be satisfied. This would produce interesting debates: Why do people believe that «financial incentives» are necessary for people to work, while at the same time everyone lives in their daily life from the work of those who cook, do laundry, clean, care for others, listen, and tidy up without such incentives? To what extent do sectors of the economy such as advertising, the weapons and automotive industries, aerospace, road construction, or cosmetic surgery satisfy the new-old core economic criterion? Using this criterion, what is work, what is provision of services? Which activities do we as a society need, which ones can we do without, which ones can human and non-human nature be expected to put up with, and which ones not? Which products and services can be monetized meaningfully and brokered via markets, and which ones require other forms of organization? What are the roles of institutions such as states, municipalities, networks, families, markets? Research desiderata would be identified and worked through: Why do far more women than men still do what is necessary in private homes, even if nobody pays them to do so? Because they have been inured to it, because they have retained a scrap of reason in the midst of late capitalism, or because it makes sense and is a source of pleasure to satisfy human needs, not only out of «self-love,» but also out of necessity, «benevolence,»<sup>149</sup> liberty, love, or whatever what points beyond the narrow horizon of *homo oeconomicus* might be called? How can care activities be rewarded—in the form of wages or in other ways—and secured so that a good life in freedom based on relatedness<sup>150</sup> can become a reality for all? Does the only apparently universally valid principle «money for

<sup>149</sup> Adam Smith 2008 (1789), 24.

<sup>150</sup> See Ina Praetorius (ed.) 2005.

services» have a future? Does human communal life, at least in its basic sense, have to be reorganized on the basis of a different principle, the «basic subsistence income»? How can a new basis for human dignity be provided this side of Kant's reductionist statement that only—according to his understanding—«reasonable beings» are entitled to it?

Because economics is a core science that affects attitudes and life practices far beyond the professional community of researchers, the relaxation would have far-reaching effects. There would be something «new under the sun.»<sup>151</sup> What the new consists of, on the earthly side of constantly being forced to pretend there is an invisible better life beyond the tangible, is what post-patriarchal philosopher Luisa Muraro matter-of-factly calls «joy» and «leaps of joy»:<sup>152</sup>

Joy results ... from the fact that at one stroke, we are relieved of the effort of pretending, which was merged with speaking, hearing, walking, loving, in short with living, and that seemed to be one with life, even though it is not true that life requires this sham; the contrary is the case. In this way, a strong sense of incomparable and gratifying joy is entirely and unexpectedly being felt because finally there is peace that requires no words or anything else that we can add about the nature of existence.<sup>153</sup>

At the endpoint of the post-dualistic joy of being, this side of incessant coercion to optimize, be active, produce, and buy, we become free not only to discover what has been taken for granted and to do it—many of us have been doing so for a long time—but also to call it by its explicit name and place it at the center of our lives.

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151 See note 77.

152 Luisa Muraro 1999.

153 Luisa Muraro 1993, 41.



# 4 Rediscovering what has been taken for granted: an open-ended list

It can be taken for granted that all people have needs at all times and that they are part of nature, which is generous, vulnerable, and limited, and that in relatedness<sup>154</sup> they are at liberty to reasonably organize their communal life, on the basis of division of labor, and in a manner that is viable into the future. This is the one and only reason why economic activity is necessary as «a societal process designed to satisfy the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life.»<sup>155</sup> It is a matter of course that in the generous cosmos there is enough for everyone, provided nobody lives beyond the means of all people collectively. The rampant fear of being shortchanged and the corresponding pressure to place personal benefit at the center of everything are not products of nature, but of targeted induction. It can be taken for granted that trading certain products and services, but not others, on markets for money is reasonable. That is why it is also self-evident that there are, and there need to be, many other institutions and practices besides money, calculated exchanges, and markets by which human needs are satisfied and that are thus part of the economic system. It can be taken for granted that humans, as creatures who are free in relatedness, want to increase more than their personal benefits, in other words, that the image of the human as *homo oeconomicus* as traditionally conceived is inadequate. Humans who do not or do not want to conform to this image are not «destined to serve» and are by no means closer to nature than others. After all, although we all have the same natality, needs, and mortality, it is obvious that various human desires, talents, and forms of living exist for which there is no place in the seemingly general mechanism of the only purportedly free interplay of supply and demand. And of course there have for a long time been plenty of people who know what is taken for granted and who are willing or are even already engaged in helping bring about a needs-centered economic system that is not organized around principles of domination.

For this reason, there is no need for a new party or a new ministry in order to rediscover and explicitly rename what can be taken for granted. What is required already exists: people and groups who think and feel and are prepared to take the first steps, pressure arising from suffering, an inspired-inspiring *Durch/Ein/Ander*, precise analyses, a clear concept of the center around which the economic system, politics, and life

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154 Ina Praetorius (ed.) 2005.

155 See note 2.



practices would have to organize themselves in an old-new way, and intelligent, ever more intelligent networking.

That is why I would like to begin an open-ended list of initiatives in this chapter. They are not ordered systematically; they point toward rediscovering what has been taken for granted, is already interrelated, or will soon forge relationships with each other.

## 4.1 Metaphorical work

Language is not limited to what is in the dictionary, but is constantly changing because it harbors infinite possibilities for recombination. Thus, it is also open to intentional transformation: to shifting definitions, coining new words, making surprising links between words, sentences, the concrete and the abstract, the supposedly private and the political. Dictionaries are subject to constant revision, so that there is even the possibility that the «reconstruction of history» (1970, 140) that occurs through intentional restatement will one day become the standard and then open itself up to other new developments.

In other words, we are not forced to remain inside the narrow confines of dichotomous concepts and predefined discourses, but can actively do what Diotima, the Italian community of women philosophers, calls «metaphorical work.»<sup>156</sup> Its journal *Via Dogana* features a section of its own for this purpose, called «L'Opera al nero,» which seeks

to transcend the boundaries of the conventional patterns of perception and valuation, including the new feminist ones. They (the authors I.P.) attempt to adopt a precise view in order to avoid using old standards and conventional thinking which would make the present ... a repetition of what has already happened, of what was already known, of known behavior, and of stereotypes, and thus eternally the same. (Günter 246)

People working on a metaphorical or symbolic plane do not provide new «examples» for old categories, but shift the categories by carefully, patiently, and consciously creating relationships of a new kind between the particular and the general:

When attempting to comprehend changing reality, it becomes ... a challenge to pick out and interpret seemingly unimportant events, in order to avoid overlooking what emerges by assuming again and again that it has the same meaning, and instead, despite the often unchanging words, genuinely saying something new, thus encountering new patterns of orientation and valuation ... (Günter 249)

Concerning economic activity in particular, in other words, work which satisfies human needs, a broad area for new interpretations opens up: Rather than submitting to the usual custom of speaking about work only in the form of «numbers, statistics,

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<sup>156</sup> Andrea Günter 1999. The page numbers in parentheses in chapter 4.1 refer to this work.

organizational structures» (Günter 251), from the perspectives of winners and losers, of «creating jobs» and «losing jobs,» it is possible to begin to «bring language to places where it was previously lacking» (Günter 251): It is possible to speak about contentment and discontent, unease, satisfaction, and meaning in activities and fields of activity, regardless of whether they involve paid or unpaid work. It is possible to make «the need for quality and successful relationships» (Günter 251) a topic of discussion and measure every concrete piece of work according to whether and in what way it satisfies «the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life.» Riane Eisler, the US care economist and author of the book with the telling title «The Real Wealth of Nations,» recommends systematically introducing the concept of caring in economic discourses here and now as a first step:

Just as words like *freedom* and *democracy* helped introduce new political models, we can all help introduce new economic models by changing the economic discourse. A first step in expanding the conversation about economics is simply to include the word *caring*. This may seem like a small thing. But it's an important step toward a new economics that gives visibility and value to what really makes us happy and healthy, and in the bargain leads to economic prosperity and ecological sustainability. Every one of us can talk about caring in our day-to-day conversations, at home, at work, ... in schools and universities, and in public spaces ...<sup>157</sup>

The authors of the «ABC of the good life» call not only for new designations of varied, constantly changing realities, but are already putting up for discussion a tried and tested «common vocabulary»:

The longer we discuss and shape the world with each other, the clearer it becomes which words we no longer need, which ones are relegated to the margins, and which ones move to the center. New words have emerged, too, for example «natality» or «shitology.» ... In other words, through repeated new efforts we have already tidied up and rearranged the symbolic order step by step, so that it better fits the realities in which we find ourselves.<sup>158</sup>

Speaking is more than «mere talk» or «dry theory.» This side of the well-established dualisms of theory and practice, science and everyday life, culture and nature, every instance of speaking encompasses the political opportunity to say something in a new way, which contributes to changing reality by touching it in playful seriousness with ever new words instead of repeating what has been predefined. It is not by chance that the «ABC of the good life» was published simultaneously in the stable form of a book and the fluid form of a blog.<sup>159</sup>

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157 Riane Eisler 2007, 229.

158 Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 13.

159 <https://abcdesgutenlebens.wordpress.com>

## 4.2 Social media

The demise of «quality journalism,» the shallowness of selfie culture, the dangers of constant surveillance, and the rampancy of falsified information and messages of hate are currently the object of many complaints. At the same time, there is no question that the Internet, in particular the blogosphere and social media, has opened up enormous opportunities to carry on long-overdue public debates without having to wait in front of locked doors for the editors-in-chief of the established «major» media to change their minds. Such ease of action facilitates the deconstruction of unbending dichotomies and supports the necessary transformation. Social media not only accelerate and multiply interactions, but can also improve their quality, provided the people involved are willing to view the new technical opportunities as a learning field and can muster the required patience:

For example, the often ridiculed large numbers of «friends» or «followers» in virtual networks can result in surprising transdisciplinary encounters, namely when someone whose virtual presence I had forgotten, in other words, for whose eyes a posting was not intended, responds with an unexpected comment, placing my position in a new, unfamiliar light. In my experience, such unexpected interventions, which often give a debate surprisingly constructive turns, occur less frequently outside the virtual space, not only because there, too, people with similar views usually meet in well-established discourse constellations, but because the visibility of the others makes it unlikely that people will «productively forget» about the concealed participants in the conversation. In this case, viewing social media as a learning field means seeking out friends who do not belong to your own «tribe»—and not taking their unexpected contributions as troublesome disturbances, but as challenges that support transformation, challenges to modify your own point of view beyond your own «filter bubble» or to refine your arguments.

At least within the still restricted circles with access to it, the Internet has significantly reduced hierarchies and subverted networks of insiders that support traditional dichotomous social structures, for example, old boys' networks, women's cliques, or hermetically closed circles debating particular theories. It enables processes of discussion across large geographical and cultural distances and contributes to a dialogue-based style of thinking characterized by a productive roughcast quality: While in the classical media and traditional academia thoughts are made available to the public only after a procedure taking months or even years, and in the form of products whose completeness and finality makes them difficult to digest, the quasi-oral form of writing online enables people to circle around topics or hypotheses in a playful, fluid, cooperative way. Yet this new, communal way of interpreting reality is not self-evident, but must be acquired as a skill.

There are plenty of examples of the post-dichotomous innovative force of astutely used virtual communication. Without *#Aufschrei* (German for outcry or uproar) on Twitter, where young women put everyday sexual harassment as a facet of the still-powerful dichotomous gender order up for discussion, the broad debate on sexism in 2013, which raised the awareness of an entire generation for unsolved gender

issues, would not have taken place in German-speaking countries. Without the intelligent combination of a constitution bearing features of direct democracy, social media, real events, and civic engagement, the Swiss people's initiative for an unconditional basic income, which was submitted to the government on October 4, 2013 with more than 120,000 signatures and will soon be voted on, would never have come about. And on November 9, 2014, people representing the Internet-based «Center for Political Beauty»<sup>160</sup>—even the name is a remarkable post-dichotomous coinage—set out for Europe's external borders. At the same time as celebrations marking the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, they created a symbolic relationship between the people who died on the border between the two German states and the migrants who had set out from the former colonies for the still arrogant supposed center of the world. While the «major» media ignored this symbolic action for the most part, information was continuously provided to the virtual public on social media, more directly than would have been possible in any of the classical media.

### 4.3 Peninsulas against the current

The means of communication provided by the Internet have also long become indispensable for most of the countless small and large socioeconomic experiments that Friederike Habermann calls «peninsulas against the current,» with reference to Theodor Adorno:

*«There are no islands in a wrong life.»* True, but there are peninsulas: Spaces—be they geographical (such as communes) or social (such as networks)—in which people try to lead a better life together. Spaces in which, to a certain extent, people create a different reality for themselves, trying out what the next steps might be. Spaces that permit people, by *living what is taken for granted* in them, to develop in different ways than possible outside such peninsulas.<sup>161</sup>

Calling initiatives such as guerilla gardening, insurance for public transportation passengers evading fares, give-away shops, dumpster diving, public bookshelves, Wikipedia, public soup kitchens, or medical assistance for refugees «peninsulas» means «queering» dichotomies such as right and wrong, capitalism and anti-capitalism, based on domination and free of domination, egoism, and altruism. (Habermann, 11-18)<sup>162</sup>

Seeking not to be an island, but rather a peninsula against the current means doing something new in the serene awareness that it will not become the perfect alternative or an idyllic world outside the constraints of the system, but certainly a contribution to «collective disidentification» (Habermann, 15) from apparently ubiquitous norms. Practically nothing is guaranteed in the process, not even the precocious knowledge

<sup>160</sup> [www.politicalbeauty.de](http://www.politicalbeauty.de)

<sup>161</sup> Friederike Habermann 2009, 9 (emphasis I. P.). The page numbers in parentheses in chapter 4.3 refer to this work.

<sup>162</sup> See also 4.10.

«that alternative economic activity is necessarily doomed to fail» (Habermann, 17): Perhaps the peninsula will be swept away one day, perhaps not, perhaps it will transform itself into something else, perhaps it will become the fertile soil for individual processes of change that will only take on a sustainable communal form in the project after next, in which the dichotomy of feminine caring labor and the masculine habitus of leadership will have been overcome. In contrast to Friederike Habermann, I think that the peninsulas also include «individual action» (Habermann, 10)—for example, familial models of the division of labor that counter the norm, refusals to consume, ethically oriented consumption, and saving water and electricity in conventional homes. After all, the supposed contrast between the lack of power of the individual and the power of the collective is resolved in the *Durch/Ein/Ander*, since the «web of human affairs» cannot easily be planned for or predicted.<sup>163</sup> Perhaps a young father's decision to mount a solar panel on his standard single-family home will cause him to read a text on the caring economy and finally to start up an academy of economics that is free in relatedness? Or a theologian's decision not to pursue a conventional academic career will free up space for her to profile the unconditional basic income as a post-patriarchal project?<sup>164</sup>

#### 4.4 Ecological social policy

In fact, there are already numerous ideas and initiatives from established political and economic institutions that do not disempower dichotomous orders in their totality, but shift them or alleviate their negative effects: subsidies for children, welfare payments, unemployment benefits, and various other transfer payments oriented toward individual well-being; child care outside the home organized by businesses or municipalities; eco-, wealth, and financial transaction taxes; subsidies for ecological economic activity; quota rules; legalization and legal equality for gay and lesbian forms of living and transsexual identities; educational and curricular reforms; rules on the free movement of people; pension splitting; targeted tax exemptions; cuts in paid working hours, minimum wages, support for part-time work (for men, too); investments in the caregiving sector; flexible working hours; home office arrangements, etc. Considered in isolation and from an already well-established standard of security provided by the welfare state, such measures may appear to be a patchwork or even a «dismantling of the welfare state» or merely contradictory efforts to combat symptoms of larger problems within the existing system. In fact, the state could do much more to support a post-dichotomous order if only the taboo of just, progressive tax could be broken. Nonetheless, in their totality, the measures already in place do point in the right direction of easing conditions that have become rigid and can be used accordingly and combined wisely with individual *art de vivre*.

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163 Hannah Arendt 1958, 204 and passim.

164 Ina Praetorius 2014b.

The idea of fundamentally decoupling wages and work in the form of an unconditional basic income<sup>165</sup> is significantly more radical than such fragmented ventures. Regardless of how they participate in the «societal process designed to satisfy the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life,»<sup>166</sup> women, men, and others would be liberated not only from fundamental anxiety about their own survival and from the stereotypical, often desperate search for «employment»—as devoid of meaning as it may be. They would also, and explicitly, be encouraged to experiment with forms of living outside the generalized model of securing their livelihoods by working for wages, for example by still untested trans-forms of existence between care, art, and ecology,<sup>167</sup> by pleasurable-ascetic forms of non-consumption and self-sufficiency, by means of livelihoods as inventors, cross-generational care cooperatives and other, not yet discernible peninsulas that could be easier to sustain and connect in networks of post-dichotomous innovation in a society with an unconditional basic income. The argument that can legitimize practically anything today, namely that «jobs» must be «created» at (practically) any cost, would become just as obsolete as the excuse that people would have to do meaningless work simply to secure their livelihoods. A self-determined re-orientation of individuals toward «satisfy[ing] the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life» would become possible again. Understood in the context of the post-dichotomous paradigm shift—and *only* in this context<sup>168</sup>—the introduction of an unconditional basic income would be an important «part of the solution»:<sup>169</sup> a presumably highly effective state measure to support the development of a liberal, just, and sustainable society.

## 4.5 Departure from the secondary contradiction

The majority of activists promoting a basic income, however, are still mistakenly convinced that it could be conceived of and introduced without the paradigm shift in the economic system still to be accomplished. For this reason, the mainstream debate usually deals with the future of the care sector and the problem of its centuries-old naturalization briefly and succinctly in the context of the question how «unpleasant work» and its lack of «recognition»<sup>170</sup> should be handled. The usual response is that in a society with a basic income, there would be: three possibilities for the unpopular tasks. One: people—each and every one—would do them themselves. We would coordinate with our neighbors for work in public spaces. Two: we leave unpleasant tasks to machines and robots, since some of this could be rationalized. Three: we would enhance the value of these ... unattractive tasks. In order to guarantee that they

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165 See Christian Müller et al. 2012, Ronald Blaschke et al. (eds.) 2013.

166 Peter Ulrich 2008, 11. See note 2.

167 See, e. g., Sacha Kagan 2012.

168 Ina Praetorius 2014.

169 See Ronald Blaschke et al. (eds.) 2013.

170 Christian Müller et al. 2012, 77f.

continue to be done, such work would have to generally be paid better and offer better conditions than today.<sup>171</sup>

The questions to be posed in response are obvious: Which activities precisely are «unpleasant,» and why? To what extent are they part of the care sector? How should the many «unpopular» tasks in private homes be dealt with; for one thing, they often involve people, for example, infants or the frail elderly, who cannot «do them themselves,» and for another, they cannot be «paid better» because they are usually not paid at all? Why did the «enhancement of the value» of care work, which is postulated here as an automatic form of self-regulation, not take place long ago in the context of the shortage of nursing staff, which has existed for years? Could it be that care will not be valued more highly and paid better in a society with a basic income, but will continue to be performed without pay or underpaid by those conditioned to do it, because it follows a logic of necessity<sup>172</sup> and can therefore not be integrated in the familiar «free» play of supply and demand or the customary methods of labor disputes? How should those who for many generations have been defined as being part of nature and thus silenced suddenly learn how to speak and also to eloquently defend their interests?<sup>173</sup> What does the innocent expectation that the people who are regarded as part of nature and who do the groundwork for the supposedly free play of market forces would speak up for themselves and then be integrated by means of regulating wages mean for nature, which is actually extra-human and unable to articulate anything in the traditional sense, and thus also for the ecological sustainability of the project of an unconditional basic income?

Not surprisingly, the obviously uncritical view of the mainstream unconditional basic income discussion, which tends to be dominated by white men, accepts the view, especially well-established on the Left, that gender issues—and thus, as has become evident, logically also the ecological question—are a «secondary contradiction.» Secondary contradictions, it is assumed, disappear by themselves as soon as the societal conditions have changed when the primary or basic contradiction, for example that of capital and labor, has been resolved. The differentiation of primary and secondary contradictions, in turn, follows the dichotomous order according to which the *oikos* as the pre-economic and «pre-political form of community»<sup>174</sup> and extra-human nature as a storehouse of materials have no dynamics or will of their own—as Aristotle, too, claimed «a slave ... will obviously require only so much virtue as will prevent him from failing in his duty through cowardice and intemperance.»<sup>175</sup>

With the abolition of the dichotomous order as such, this hierarchization of first- and second-order liberation movements becomes superfluous; it has long been disproven by feminists, along with many other well-established patterns of behavior such

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171 Ibid. 78f.

172 Antje Schrupp 2013; See also the article on «Notwendigkeit» («Necessity») in Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 103f.

173 See on this the widely discussed question of post-colonialism formulated first by Gayatri Spivak: «Can the subaltern speak?» (Gayatri Spivak 2007).

174 Helmut Thielicke 1979.

175 Aristotle 2000, 52.



as contempt for women's thinking, often disguised as gallantry,<sup>176</sup> which still manifests itself today in the widespread custom (not only) of men to ignore feminist analyses. Why? Because by definition, *materia* has no voice and can at best function as an echo, but cannot say anything new?<sup>177</sup> Or because the fear of *Durch/Ein/Ander* and losing privileges is greater than the desire for change?

#### 4.6 Dirty work: searching for traces

There are other ways to prepare for a society with a basic income which are better thought through than the strategy of avoidance in the tradition of hierarchizing supposed primary and secondary contradictions. One of them is focusing systematically and with curiosity on the «unpopular» activities, and thus on the mostly unexplored<sup>178</sup> «lowly» areas of the symbolic and social order: What is sometimes called «dirty work» often touches on what is called «excrement,» «stool,» «feces,» or «shit.» Since all people are part of nature, it is an unalterable fact, despite all the yearning for cleansing spiritualization, that we must not only be supplied unceasingly with air, water, and food, but that we also produce waste. Filth in all its forms does not disappear by itself, but must be collected and cleared away; managed, disposed of, or transformed, for example, into fertilizer or biogas, in sanitary installations. Instead of ostensibly ridding oneself of this supposedly embarrassing<sup>179</sup> side of all life and the corresponding work by pushing it away into spheres of dependency, vocations with low recognition and poor pay, into euphemisms and extra-economic discourses, they could systematically be placed at the center of attention in the sense of deconstructing the dichotomous order. That is why the «ABC of the good life» includes an article devoted to the topic of «shit»:

Making shit a taboo ... stands in the way of recognizing shit as the foundation of life. The fact that shit, as fertilizer, causes new food to emerge, is ... evidence of the fact that we are designed to cooperate with all life forms. In so doing, people recognize themselves as beings integrated into the cycle of life, with needs, dependent on others, physical, and mortal. ... Explicitly naming shit and how we deal with it, and making it visible, means focusing thinking and acting on essential conducts and spheres of life that receive little attention in the prevailing order, such as households, agriculture, care, and cleaning. It means grappling systematically with the meaning of shit and of the activities involved with it—as well as with the significance of the people who carry out these activities. In order to strengthen this process, we need ... a theory, an

176 Heidemarie Bennent 1985.

177 Ina Praetorius 2009.

178 It is positive to note that people have recently begun to research dirty work, see for example Lena Schürmann 2013. Regarding earlier artistic exploration, see «The Maintenance Art Manifesto» (1969) by Mierle Laderman Ukeles.

179 See chapter 1.2 of this essay, in particular note 28.



economics, and an ethics of shit. Some authors among us have already begun with this «shitology».<sup>180</sup>

Inasmuch as «economic activity based on division of labour is a societal process designed to satisfy the human need to preserve and sustain life and the quality of life,»<sup>181</sup> activities that deal with processing or disposing of shit and other materials sometimes considered unpleasant or disgusting—urine, corpses, earth, dung, trash ...—are not only a necessary, but a central part of the economic system. When garbage collection or cleaning services do not happen, when farmers or women go on strike, as they did on June 14, 1991 in Switzerland, this becomes immediately obvious. That is why the economic system, as soon as it organizes itself once again around its self-defined center, must explicitly include dirty work and shitty jobs in its scope, regardless of who performs them when and where and under what conditions, and whether they are included in the flow of money or not. Whether the experimental term «shitology» will prevail is an open question; the authors of the «ABC» propose it as a conceptual bracket for the now necessary multi-dimensional research on the areas of work with dirt and dirty work, which are for the time being largely isolated from one another. It appears plausible to me that at this point, where the task is to reflect upon the dependency of all on the disposal and processing of «disgusting» materials, it is necessary to provoke discussion and place a clear focus on this matter for at least a certain period of time.

## 4.7 The thinking of natality

The Platonic Socrates explicitly considered born life (including all joy and all shit) a burdensome antecedent of actual spiritual being, which only begins at death:

The body presents us with innumerable distractions, because of the necessity of looking after it ... with emotions of love, desire, and fear, with all kinds of phantasy and nonsense ... it seems, we shall have our heart's desire, that of which we claim to be lovers, even wisdom—when we die ... ... for then, but not till then, *the soul will be independent, free from the body.*<sup>182</sup>

In light of this original conviction of Western thought, whose comprehensive reception for centuries made Christian theology a «religion of the hereafter,» it is not surprising that for a long time, people were called «mortals,» as though this were a matter of course. Today, the obvious fact that people are also *natal* is being rediscovered after being repressed intellectually almost entirely. Beside the stereotypical dualistic conception that being born means being locked into the body as if into a prison

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<sup>180</sup> Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 115f.

<sup>181</sup> See note 2.

<sup>182</sup> Plato 1955, 50-51 (emphases I. P.). See note 25.

of the soul, human existence now appears *surprising, unique, full of initiative, free in relatedness*:

The first step was taken in 1951 by Hannah Arendt. On the last pages of her monumental work «The Origins of Totalitarianism,» she refers to the fact that humans are not, as some existentialists believed, tossed into the world by chance,<sup>183</sup> but are born as newcomers into an ordered fabric of generations and relationships. Nothing else can provide hope after the Holocaust:

We know that the iron band of total terror leaves no space for such private life and that the self-coercion of totalitarian logic destroys man's capacity for experience and thought just as certainly as his capacity for action. *Initium ergo ut esset, creatus est homo, ante quem nullus fuit* «that a beginning be made man was created» said Augustine. This beginning is guaranteed by each new birth; it is indeed every man.<sup>184</sup>

In her second major work, «The Human Condition,» Arendt adds to this idea and develops it into a post-dichotomous theory of freedom and action:<sup>185</sup>

Because they are *initium*, newcomers and beginners by virtue of birth, men take initiative, are prompted into action. ... The new always happens against the overwhelming odds of statistical laws and their probability, which for all practical, everyday purposes amounts to certainty; the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. ... This character of startling unexpectedness is inherent in ... the fact of birth of the human condition of natality ... And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world.<sup>186</sup>

Thinkers such as Artur Boelderl, Barbara Bronnen, Adriana Cavarero, Andrea Günter, Luce Irigaray, Ludger Lütkehaus, Luisa Muraro, Hans Saner, Christina Schües, and Hanna Strack have since linked up to Arendt's thoughts on natality in different ways.<sup>187</sup> For example, Hans Saner developed the connection that already existed in Arendt's work in nascent form, namely between *memento nasci* and new categories of the human—beginning, curiosity, play, experimentation, hope, having time, uniqueness, imagination—that needed to be considered.<sup>188</sup> And he succinctly formulated an obvious point that had long been ignored: «Man is mortal from the beginning and natal until death.»<sup>189</sup>

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**183** Hannah Arendt 1998, 183. Arendt added this passage when translating *The Human Condition* into German.

**184** Hannah Arendt 1951, 474, 479.

**185** Hannah Arendt 1998, 177-178.

**186** *Ibid.* 177f.

**187** See Ina Praetorius 2011a and 2011b for the references.

**188** Hans Saner 1987.

**189** *Ibid.* 31.

Christina Schües painstakingly traced the history of how birth was blocked out in Western thinking.<sup>190</sup> Adriana Cavarero, Andrea Günther, Luce Irigaray, and Luisa Muraro made connections to feminist discourses: they showed that suppressing the real beginning and its significance for what was formerly known as «this mortal world» is closely tied to the original, symbolic «matricide»—the equation of the motherly with voiceless *materia*, the removal of Xanthippe from the circle of philosophers. And they recognized the link between the silence about the real beginning and the fixation on a hereafter—constituted in many ways—that distracts attention from a here and now filled with meaning.

In her work, she focuses on the site that the gaze of men has long sought to avoid for fear of staring death in the face as the yardstick of human existence. This anxiety is what gives rise to the symbolic event that constitutes the original act of matricide. It is also the basis of the obsessive desire to endure, to survive, which leads men to entrust eternal objects of thought with the task of «saving» them from the selfsame death they chose as the locus of meaning when they decided, not by chance, to call themselves *mortals* [subject to death, *morte*].<sup>191</sup>

Perceiving oneself as natal—or in the monastic tradition: as newly born every day—opens up surprising points of access to your own ability to act outside predetermined paths, in particular by no longer experiencing freedom and dependency as irreconcilable, but as belonging together: People who live their own natality need no morality fixed without reference to the world for post-dichotomous transformation, no party doctrine, and equality understood only pragmatically as an instrument for reducing unjustified privileges. They need relationships with other people who know how to orient themselves *as distinct individuals* beyond ready-made identities in freedom based on relatedness and how to organize themselves anew time and again. In light of this freedom to weave one's own life «like a thread into a fabric that you did not create yourself»,<sup>192</sup> the hereafter, constituted in many ways—from hell to Wall Street, from Armageddon to paradise, from political ideology to religious dogma—actually becomes much less attractive in the positive and negative senses.

#### 4.8 The *other* in between: post-dichotomous reconstruction of the religious

The fact that the Christian tradition places a divine birth—and «the cross and the resurrection» only as a consequence of this—at its center, is just one of many indications of its openness to new post-patriarchal interpretations. Not by chance was it a

<sup>190</sup> Christina Schües 2008.

<sup>191</sup> Adriana Cavarero 1995, 7. See also Luce Irigaray 1985.

<sup>192</sup> Hannah Arendt 1998, 183. Arendt added this passage when translating *The Human Condition* into German.

non-believing Jewish woman who succinctly formulated this specific characteristic of connectability:

It is, in other words, the birth of new men and the beginning, the action they are capable of by virtue of being born. Only the full experience of this capacity can bestow upon human affairs faith and hope, those two essential characteristics of human existence which Greek antiquity ignored altogether ... It is this faith in and hope for the world that found perhaps its most glorious and most succinct expression in the few words with which the Gospels announced their «glad tidings»: «A child has been born unto us.»<sup>193</sup>

Not only Christian feminist theologians have begun to discover in recent decades sustainable aspects of their religion under thick layers of patriarchal dogma. It is nothing new that boundary-crossing processes of understanding leading to cooperative development of such elements of tradition are taking place, within the only apparently solely authoritative institutional and curricular guidelines. In the «ABC of the good life» these conversations are described as follows:

[Such] conversations are experimental dialogues that create post-patriarchal connotations derived from people's questions about meaning and structuring. They are not about demarcating closed doctrinal systems, but about developing new ideas and questioning traditions concerning their suitability for everyday life, their potential for liberation, and their transformability: Which fragments of the official dogmatics prove useful in concrete situations? How can I breathe new life into the wisdom of my ancestors without excluding my neighbors? Which words and gestures fit with our needs and experiences? Should we invent new ones?<sup>194</sup>

It is true that the Occident still occasionally refers to itself as «the Christian West.» However, the fact that the future of the answer to questions about meaning cannot be formulated in the context of just a single tradition has long been clear to the avant-garde coming together in the «interreligious think tank» in Switzerland. In an interreligious manifesto titled «Women's freedom and religion are compatible,» these researchers with various backgrounds have put into words why and how they want to retain a way of life characterized by religion:

We consider religiosity to be a certain attitude to the world and to human existence. This attitude consists above all in recognizing an inaccessible horizon that cannot be appropriated by any person or any grouping. In the monotheistic traditions, this comprehensive presence is usually called «God.» In non-monotheistic worldviews, terms such as the «original source of life,» the

<sup>193</sup> Hannah Arendt 1998, 178.

<sup>194</sup> Ursula Knecht et al. 2012, 85.

«way,» «emptiness,» etc. are used. Because they are aware of the inaccessibility of the final truth, all people who are religious in this sense share respect for others who draw meaning and life energy from other traditions.<sup>195</sup>

Accessing the religious traditions of the world in a post-patriarchal way is a self-evident contribution to a good form of global communal life, for in post-secular times, human reason no longer cuts itself off «from important resources of meaning.»<sup>196</sup> The apparently firmly established boundaries between belief and knowledge, reason and emotion, myth and logos, publicness and «private matters» are dissipating in the *Durch/Ein/Ander*. It is time for conversations of this kind between religious people of all traditions and those who «in another way attain to the effects for which prayer is recommended [and] will not be in need of it» in a period in which the question of meaning is once again emerging in the public sphere.

As to the Christian tradition, it could prove interesting that the German prefix *Kar-* is related to the English word care:<sup>197</sup> This prefix, to be found in the German terms *Karwoche* (Holy Week) and *Karfreitag* (Good Friday), the most important Protestant holiday, is derived from the Old High German *Kara*, which once meant «sorrow» or «grief» and corresponds to the Gothic term *chara*, which in turn is related to the English word care with its various meanings. What would it feel like to celebrate the *Karwoche* as a week of caring? In other words, placing not grief for the crucified savior, but enthusiasm for his care-centered way of life at the center? – At Easter, the celebration of resurrection, we could then celebrate the uprising as involving a concept of being based on everlasting, loving *Durch/Ein/Ander*.

## 4.9 *Sumak kawsay* and gross national happiness

The Andean concept of *sumak kawsay* has been anchored in the constitutions of Ecuador and Bolivia since 2008 and 2009, respectively. Like many other thinkers (partially) socialized in the European tradition, the German–Brazilian liberation theologian Paulo Suess translates it as *buen vivir: good living/living well*. However, he immediately adds that *sumak kawsay* should by no means be casually considered the same as the Occidental concept of the good life, which is usually tied back to the Aristotelian *eudaimonia* and anchored firmly in dichotomous metaphysics. Rather, the contemporary reference to *sumak kawsay* is an explicit «breakaway from a development model based on acceleration, accumulation, economic growth, exports, and exploitation of nature and human beings,» based on Andean cosmology and anthropology and not directly compatible with Western thinking. What is meant is that «good living,» on the basis of cultural diversity and social justice, is embedded in a complex and non-linear concept of recognition, valuation, and dialogue in which man and nature are equal partners.<sup>198</sup>

195 Interreligiöser Think Tank 2011, 2. See on this also Ina Praetorius 2014a, 65-73.

196 Habermas 2003, 109.

197 Duden [dictionary] 1963, article on *Karfreitag* (Good Friday).

198 Paulo Suess 2012, 27f.

The national policy objective of «gross national happiness,»<sup>199</sup> anchored in Art. 9 of Bhutan's 2008 constitution, also contests the arrogated monopoly of Western traditions to define what is good. This concept, too, distances itself from development models unilaterally oriented toward economic efficiency and the Western modes of argument it implicitly includes. Following the Buddhist tradition combines material prosperity with «spiritual well-being in harmonious serenity»<sup>200</sup> and defines five core areas in which happiness is primarily realized: human development, balanced development, protection of the environment, preservation of culture and traditions, and good governance.

While such well-advanced initiatives often perplex Western academia and are considered «radical breaks in the system,»<sup>201</sup> the fact that other traditions are rediscovered in light of the collapse of Western dominance and established as authoritative by, for example, being included in constitutions, is actually nothing but logical. The extent to which such alternatives are sustainable cannot be determined in general, but only on a case-by-case basis, and surely not from behind a European desk.

## 4.10 From human dignity to the dignity of living beings

An example of the fact that diversions from the apparently preordained path of Western/secular ethics and legal theory are also possible in the middle of Europe is Swiss voters deciding in a referendum on May 17, 1992 to include the term «dignity of living beings» in their constitution:<sup>202</sup>

The Confederation shall legislate on the use of reproductive and genetic materials from animals, plants and other organisms. In doing so, it shall take account of the dignity of living beings as well as the safety of human beings, animals and the environment, and shall protect the genetic diversity of animal and plant species.<sup>203</sup>

The concept of the creature or «living being»<sup>204</sup> is, definitely comparable to *sumak kawsay*, a religious element foreign to the secular language of the law. It is true that it derives from the Christian tradition and is thus less distant from the Occidental mainstream than the cosmology of the Andean peoples. Nonetheless, anchoring the «dignity of living beings» in the constitution has, for the time being, elicited considerable perplexity, even defensiveness, in the relevant «normal sciences» (Kuhn 1973, passim). Confusion is great precisely because the concept of dignity is at the center of modern ethics and legal theory: how should human beings, an end in themselves,

199 See Michael Lysander Fremuth et al. (eds.) 2010.

200 Ibid. 12.

201 Anna Findl-Ludescher et al. (eds.) 2012, 36 and passim.

202 See on this Ina Praetorius 2008.

203 Article 120 Section 2 of the Federal Constitution of the Swiss Federation of April 18, 1999.

204 Creature, from the Latin *creare*/to create, *creatura*/what has been created. The wording in the German version of the Swiss Constitution is *Kreatur* for «living beings.»

always previously defined in *differentiation* to non-human nature and exclusively the domain of «God's image,» and the human being as the «rational being,» be transferred to non-human nature?

To this day, the fundamental rights of all human beings refer to the pivotal element of «human dignity,» as proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948 in the «Universal Declaration of Human Rights,» which has by now been ratified by almost all members. Article 1 states:

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.<sup>205</sup>

However, the term «brotherhood» seems similarly out of place in the 21st century as the notion—not explicitly abandoned to this day—of tying dignity to the «as it were»<sup>206</sup> sanctified gift of reason—and according to Kant, it is not certain that women,<sup>207</sup> non-whites, or people with a mental disability have this gift. The view still maintained today by the Roman Catholic church, namely that despite «the firm conviction that men and women are equal in dignity»<sup>208</sup> the church also continues to uphold the precept «that dignity and vocation that result from the specific diversity and personal originality of man and woman,»<sup>209</sup> seems even more disconcerting than such implicit biases. Internal contradictions of this kind in the concept of human dignity reveal that it is by no means as timeless—and thus sacrosanct—as the certainly comprehensible and, to a limited extent, reasonable pathos often surrounding it would have us believe. The concept of dignity, as central as it may be for the tradition of human rights and as important as it will remain in the future, has a history, as does every word, and is constantly undergoing transformation: In light of the challenge of again conceiving what is human as part of nature, the task is to develop a concept of dignity that is no longer based on the division into «human culture» and «brute matter,»<sup>210</sup> which has become obsolete, and thus protects more than the interests of some people vis-à-vis a kind of nature which is conceived of as external to these people. The confusion prompted by the concept of the «dignity of living beings,» which has been elevated to constitutional status, holds transformative potential in this sense, not least because an article of the constitution approved by referendum cannot be dismissed as an empty formula or

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**205** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Basic Law passed on May 23, 1949, for the three Western zones and in force for all of Germany since October 3, 1990, begins with an appeal to inalienable human dignity: «Human dignity shall be inviolable. To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.» (Article 1 Section 1 Basic Law)

**206** «This estimation (of the rational human being, I.P.) therefore shows that the worth of such a disposition is dignity, and places it infinitely above all price, with which it cannot for a moment be brought into comparison or competition without as it were violating its sanctity.»(Immanuel Kant 2005, 93).

**207** «I hardly believe that the fair sex is capable of principles ...» (See note 53.)

**208** Apostolic exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* 2013, 83. See note 38.

**209** Apostolic Letter *Mulieris Dignitatem* 1988, 10. See note 37.

**210** Andreas Weber 2013, 26. See note 8.



legal gimmickry. In the debate about this term, which is far from over and which concerns the question how seven billion—and soon more—human bearers of dignity will be able to protect themselves and their future *together with* living nature of which they are part, thinking about natality may prove helpful, where possible combined with the approach of «enlivenment.»<sup>211</sup>

## 4.11 Queer ecology

It is only logical that gender differences are also de-dualizing themselves in the post-patriarchal *Durch/Ein/Ander*. Why should, of all things, the repressive duality placed at the center of the dichotomous order resist deconstruction? It is no coincidence that the Vatican fears queer theory and practice as «genderism» (which has become more and more widely known since the publication of Judith Butler's «Gender Trouble»):<sup>212</sup> Queering the supposedly natural, hierarchically constituted binary gender order through the certainty that more than just two genders exist, as do many more pleasurable forms of living together than the allegedly only natural one, namely heterosexual monogamy, tackles the center of the dichotomous order and upsets its (latent) central dogma.

In the form of «queer ecology,»<sup>213</sup> queering has entered debates about the relationship between human beings and nature and about sustainable economic activity. Queer ecology transcends dualisms such as those between woman and man, inside and outside,<sup>214</sup> heterosexuality and homosexuality, subject and object, science and art, nature and culture, and theory and practice as an important voice in the concert of experimental-post-dichotomous movements. Besides heteronormativity, it focuses in particular on the rich diversity of sexual variants of the more-than-human nature-culture. As Sacha Kagan describes it:

Indeed, sexuality in nature, whether reproductive or non-reproductive, is much more complex, polymorphic and changing than was conceived only a few decades ago, with the traditional view of a functional evolution of sexuality.<sup>215</sup>

Timothy Morton argues that

biodiversity and gender diversity are deeply intertwined .... Plants and animals are hermaphroditic before they are bisexual and are bisexual before they are heterosexual. Males and females of most plants and half the animals can become hermaphrodites either together or in turn, and hermaphrodites can become male or female; many switch gender constantly.<sup>216</sup>

<sup>211</sup> See on this *ibid.* and Ina Praetorius 2008.

<sup>212</sup> Judith Butler 1991.

<sup>213</sup> Sacha Kagan 2012, 22f., Timothy Morton 2010.

<sup>214</sup> Timothy Morton 2010, 274.

<sup>215</sup> Sacha Kagan 2012, 25.

<sup>216</sup> Timothy Morton 2010, 276.



Queer ecology also shakes up traditional conceptualizations such as «environment» or «protection of nature» and the concepts of human action they involve: if nature is perceived as *both* outside and inside, then the notion that ecological action is about controlling or protecting areas «around us» becomes obsolete. The idea that people could «plan» or «be in command of» natural developments from a higher-ranking position disintegrates. We need to seek out forms and concepts for a synergy of interconnected and constantly changing cooperating-conflicting entities, all of which are nature-culture and influence and regulate each other. The image of walking through a landscape could approximate this post-dichotomous understanding of ecological co-action and gives a healthy knock to the classical concept of researchers sitting motionless at their desks:

Walking is not only an everyday practice characterizing the human being, but also a ... form of *action research*. It allows embodied learning. Walking-based practices put learned things in contexts, locally and ecologically, embedded in a real geography ... Thanks to the slower rhythm, the walker heightens his or her attention. Walking across places involves moving, exchanging, comparing. Walking is transversal because the transversal is that which cuts across, walks across, different levels of reality.<sup>217</sup>

## 4.12 Care revolution

On March 15, 2014, occupational scientist Gabriele Winker opened the first *Action Conference Care Revolution* with the question of what a «care revolution» might entail:

We use this term to mean political action that takes a radically different starting point for political argumentation. We argue ... for a type of action that thinks about politics and economics not from the perspective of growth rates and securing and maximizing profits, but from the perspective of human needs, that is, most importantly, caring and being cared for. ... We must ... make clear that an economic, a societal system must be able to satisfy basic needs of all people in their diversity without discriminating against people from other regions of the world.<sup>218</sup>

It is true that Gabriele Winker did not explicitly talk about a paradigm shift. The initial intention of the action conference was to bring together people and groupings from various contexts of care—private households, caregiving, raising children, self-care, cleaning services, etc.—to exchange experiences and to motivate them to join forces and take political action, and this took priority over the necessary work on a post-dichotomous theory. Still, this topic was raised in the form of an appeal to network the emerging care movement with other social movements:

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<sup>217</sup> Sacha Kagan 2012, 37.

<sup>218</sup> Gabriele Winker 2014, 68.

We can ... develop our programmatic ideas further, based on our various desires and ideas. It is important ... that we introduce our thoughts about a new economic system oriented toward care into other social movements as well, I am thinking here of the protests about crises or the ecological movement critical of growth. Other social movements can only benefit from this, and the care movement can, at the same time, become broader and clearer, louder and more visible.<sup>219</sup>

The organizers of the action conference in Berlin had anticipated about 150 attendees. Yet five hundred came. People with disabilities thought about the «right to good assistance» together with their carers. Mothers and fathers exposed the potential of the propagandistic term «work-life balance» to obscure things. Researchers from various disciplines exchanged ideas with autonomously organized «caring communities.» A Polish carer who migrated to Switzerland was applauded as a pioneer because she had won a lawsuit against her employer who had not paid her appropriately for providing 24-hour home care for the elderly. Participants reported about the consequences of the policy of privatization in the German health-care system, the precarious situation in southern European hospitals created by the rigid austerity policy in the course of the euro crisis—and about successful resistance against it. And there were many more surprising encounters.

It is an open question whether the «Network Care Revolution,» which has since been founded, will become the gathering place for a sufficient number of people who have understood that there is a *causal link* between the struggle of care migrants for fair pay and experiments with small-scale organic agriculture, post-patriarchal work on language that does justice to reality, the right of transsexuals to societal recognition, and many other things. This transformative approach is still too young. It seems plausible to me that because ownership of the term «care» has not yet been claimed by an academic discipline or a political party, precisely because it is still undergoing transdisciplinary development, and because as an English term, it can potentially be understood around the world, this implies that it has the potential to topple the dichotomous paradigm. I hope that the «Care Revolution» conference will go down in the history of mankind as the beginning of a major movement and as a decisive element of the post-dichotomous paradigm shift.

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219 Ibid. 70.

## TAKING THE NEXT STEPS

The list with which I provisionally conclude my deliberations on a needs-centered economic system based on what has been taken for granted is natal: a personal collection of beginnings characterized by unmistakable relationships and instances of relatedness, beginnings that are different in nature and, for the time being, mostly unconnected. Even in our Internet age, nobody can keep track of everything going on in the whole wide world. That is why the list is open-ended and awaits links and additions, just as the world is always awaiting ever new beginnings crossing and queering each other, approaching each other, joining up in networks and new synergies, and continuing to develop.

Concerning my Western tradition, I am convinced that the decision of Platonic Socrates to send Xanthippe and the child home into a mute existence can be reversed. We can decide anew what we want to regard as real: an invisible, bodiless hereafter—heaven, hell, Wall Street—or an irreplaceable existence in the here and now, which we as natal, needy-free, mortal beings shape in life-affirming and ever new ways—both *durch einander* (through one another in the social sense) and *durch ein Ander* (through an other in the transcendental sense). Perhaps we have already made that decision.

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Economics has become a kind of bellwether science from which many people obtain their view of what is «normal» and «right» about the value of relationships and activities. However, of all things, those activities for satisfying needs that are carried out in private households are studied either not at all or only marginally in economic science today, and are often distorted.

What are the consequences of this omission? The theologian Ina Praetorius answers this question in her essay «The care-centered economy» by taking readers on an intellectual journey through the Western history of ideas and demonstrating how an inequitable dichotomous order is deeply rooted in the way today's economy and society are organized.

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