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## **A REVIEW OF THE LIBERAL THEORY OF JUSTICE: WOMEN'S INVISIBLE CONTRIBUTIONS TO FAMILY**

### **Abstract**

The cunning of separating the public and private spheres, stealing from the latter all the value, tarnishes the origins of some of the most important political theories of nowadays, as is the case with the liberal theory of justice. The consequence is that, in a sibylline manner, there is a systematic appropriation of the emotional and affective force and care capabilities of women, which has many negative consequences for them and for social cohesion. Occidental feminist theory has interrogated and displaced the border between these two worlds, public and private. As some socialist and marxist sectors have shown, the family absorbs, without compensation, the actions of women as identity builders, free wound healers of others and feeders of foreign egos. The broad spectrum of work that must be carried out to guarantee generational change and social functioning, arduous but invisible, is actually and it should be shown in social practice, a collective responsibility.

### **KEYWORDS**

liberal theory, feminist theory, family law, ethics of care, theories of recognition

## SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

liberalizm, feminizm, prawo rodzinne, etyka troski, teorie uznania

### 1. FEMALE FREEDOM TO CHOOSE BETWEEN VARIOUS VITAL PROJECTS AND PUBLIC POLICIES

If we talk about democratic quality, and we are interested in building fair societies, not only economically developed, but with a high rate of social cohesion, we cannot ignore the relationship between the sexes. One aspect of freedom is women's free choice between various vital itineraries from their deep self, from their most intimate authenticity, and not from the determinism of a defined socializing process or from guidelines set by irresponsible media addresses of communication<sup>1</sup>. If the above does not take place, healthy, deep, lasting and happy interpersonal relationships will not be generated in society, and this will greatly affect the achievement of social cohesion. This requires adequate public policies that attribute the same political-social assessment to different vital projects of emancipatory tendency, to different forms of living full lives that women can choose, without being conditioned by different manifestations of symbolic power such as Bourdieu explains:

The continuous, silent, invisible injunctions that the sexually hierarchized world into which they are thrown addresses to them, prepare women, at least as much as explicit calls to order, to accept as self-evident, natural and "going without saying" arbitrary prescriptions and proscriptions which, inscribed in the order of things, insensibly imprint themselves in the order of bodies. Although the world always presents itself as strewn with indices and signs designating things to do or not to do, intimating the actions and movements that are possible, probable or impossible, the "things to do" and "the things forth-coming" that are offered (...)<sup>2</sup>.

One of the crossroads that disturb the internal harmony of some women is the need to choose between projecting their personal fulfillment onto the construction of a family, putting the means to perform professionally, trying to reconcile both facets, case in which there will appear before or then the problems derived from the "mental" and "material" double working days. Men also have to decide what kind of life they want to live, but often they find an already established family, which they enjoy with minimal sacrifice or personal dedication

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<sup>1</sup> M.A. Novales Alquézar, *Derecho antidiscriminatorio y género: Las premisas invisibles*, Santiago de Chile 2004, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> P. Bourdieu, *Masculine domination*, R. Nice (transl.), Stanford, CA 2001, p. 56.

or, at least, taking advantage of a multitude of invisible tasks in the family that almost always end up being developed by women.

Institutionally, the syndrome contrary to King Midas<sup>3</sup> has contributed a lot to the axiological abandonment of private life. Given this situation, real equality of treatment between men and women would require re-valorizing and re-signification of public policies.

## 2. LIBERAL THEORY AND UNPAID WORK

Given the situation described, the liberal strategy of excluding the private world from legal or political discourse, or from the epistemological field in general, is already “a taking of side”.

The origin of the private/public distinction is found in the Roman legal world, but the integration of ethics into politics, by not distinguishing the private from the public, is consistent with the characteristic thinking of Greek politics. The sharp separation between politics and ethics, that modernity brought to us, leads to a distinction between a private and a public sphere, each with its own rules, which implies a specific change in what is understood by politics, more linked to power than to justice. After Machiavelli, politics ceases to base wisdom on the fair order so as to occupy a very different entity: power.

The origin of the public sphere is not a mystery. The social contract generates the public world of civil law, civil liberty, equality, the contract and the individual. But what is the (conjectural) history of the origin of the private sphere?<sup>4</sup> The truth is that the sexual and matrimonial contract was excluded from the social pact<sup>5</sup>. Regarding the exclusion of any reference to the private from the social contract, but without keeping women in the state of nature, Pateman writes:

Women have no part in the original contract, but they are not left behind in the state of nature – that would defeat the purpose of the sexual contract! Women are incorporated into a sphere that both is and is not in civil society. The private sphere is part of civil society but is separated from the “civil” sphere. The antinomy private/public is another expression of natural/civil and women/men<sup>6</sup>.

The distinction between a public and a private spheres is a strategy of patriarchy for women to join civil society differently than men. The cunningness of this skill tarnishes the origins of the most important political theories of today. This is

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<sup>3</sup> It consists in the devaluation of everything that is touched, trades, functions, tasks, consultations, problems, etc.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. C. Pateman, *The sexual contract*, Stanford, CA 1988, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> M.A. Novales Alquézar, *op.cit.*, pp. 317–348.

<sup>6</sup> C. Pateman, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

the case of liberal theory of justice<sup>7</sup>. Rarely asked are questions about the political significance of the existence of the two spheres, or how both emerged<sup>8</sup>. Arendt pointed out that *private* is etymologically related to *deprivation*. The private is what should be out of sight or what cannot be exposed. It is connected with shame and incompleteness. For Arendt, this notion of the private implies excluding from the public the aspects of human life related to the body and the affections<sup>9</sup>. Indeed, patriarchal civil society is divided into two spheres, but the focus is only on one, considered the only kingdom of political interest. The private sphere “is not seen as politically relevant. Marriage and the marriage contract are, therefore, also deemed politically irrelevant. To ignore the marriage contract is to ignore half the original contract”<sup>10</sup>. It is curious to detect how the most important works of modern Western thought focus attention in the public sphere by relegating what happens in the private to the background<sup>11</sup>.

From the position of Nussbaum, when questioning the effective ways for the practical persecution of justice between the sexes, the liberal strategy of excluding the private must be qualified and she carries out this qualification from her theory of capabilities, but without abandoning liberal theory<sup>12</sup>:

By thinking of the affiliative needs of each person, as well as each person’s needs for the whole range of the human capabilities, we can best ask questions about how the family should be shaped by public policy, and what other affiliative institutions public policy has reason to support. I shall argue that the liberal account of basic capabilities I have been developing provides an even better framework for analysis, here, than standard liberal proceduralist approaches, since it is explicitly committed to a prominent place for love and care as important goals of social planning and as major moral abilities – within a life governed by the critical use of practical reason. At the same time, by not ruling any institution “private” and so off limits for purposes of public scrutiny, the capabilities approach avoids a common defect of at least some liberal theories<sup>13</sup>.

However, as Habermas recognizes, the interrelation between public space and private space can no longer be unknown. The world of life can no longer be hidden and draws attention to the criteria with which the public sphere is defined:

<sup>7</sup> M.A. Novales Alquézar, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

<sup>8</sup> I.M. Young, *Justice and the politics of difference*, New Jersey 1990, Sp. ed. S. Álvarez (transl.), *La justicia y la política de la diferencia*, Madrid 2000, p. 186.

<sup>9</sup> H. Arendt, *The human condition*, Chicago 1958, Sp. ed. *La condición humana*, Barcelona 1993, pp. 58–67.

<sup>10</sup> C. Pateman, *op.cit.*, p. 12.

<sup>11</sup> M.A. Novales Alquézar, *op. cit.*, p. 182.

<sup>12</sup> In fact, Nussbaum’s approach complements John Rawls’s liberal theory, although she misses in this theory a realistic psychology adapted to the human condition.

<sup>13</sup> M.C. Nussbaum, *Women and human development: The capabilities approach*, Cambridge, UK, New York 2000, pp. 244–245.

(...) communication in a public sphere that recruits private persons from civil society depends on the spontaneous inputs from a lifeworld whose core private domains are intact. At the same time, the normative intuition that private and public autonomy reciprocally presuppose each other informs public dispute over the criteria for securing the equal autonomy of private persons, that is, criteria that specify what material preconditions of legal equality are required at a given time<sup>14</sup>.

Indeed, the importance of feminist theory in questioning and displacing the border between public and private is known. For example, feminist theory has revealed the danger of not universalizing an ethics of care. The application of the principle of care without restrictions engenders very important risks that directly affect distribution problems<sup>15</sup>. If we only attend to the principle of care without balancing it with that of justice, the conclusion results in unequally distributed responsibilities, i.e. links and responsibility only for some people. In any case, care is associated with a learning of will and the redefinition of practices, e.g. if the state health system covers 12 hours of child and dependent care, and 100 hours are needed, who covers the difference? Evidently, women, since the commitment comes to them, through the process of socialization, in a different way from how it reaches men, which translates into a diversity of expectations regarding what women and men should do and an abuse of women's attention and emotional abilities<sup>16</sup>.

In short, the concern for "care" reflects very well the general approach of feminist theory as a critical theory, raising doubts about the hierarchy between principles and agents, and unmasking the image of a moral agent as an agent with autonomy and without ties, uprooted in short, on which the entire building of the liberal conception of justice stands<sup>17</sup>, which forgets to bring to the forefront the reflection about who, how, and at what price will take care of children and dependent people in society.

Rawls himself, years after publishing his well-known theory of justice in 1971, and echoing the abundant feminist criticism to his liberal proposal<sup>18</sup>, publishes the article *The idea of public reason revisited*:

However, a liberal conception of justice may have to allow for some traditional gendered division of labor within families – assume, say, that this division is based on religion – provided it is fully voluntary and does not result from or lead to injustice.

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<sup>14</sup> J. Habermas, *Between facts and norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, W. Rehg (transl.), Cambridge, Mass. 1996, p. 417.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. N. Fraser, A. Honneth, *Redistribution or recognition? A political-philosophical exchange*, London, New York 2003.

<sup>16</sup> M.A. Novales Alquézar, *op. cit.*, p. 183.

<sup>17</sup> As graphically states S. Moller Okin, *Justice, gender and the family*, New York 1989, p. 13: "To a large extent, contemporary theories of justice, like those of the past, are about men with wives at home".

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Novales Alquézar, *op. cit.*, pp. 86–167.

To say that this division of labor is in this case fully voluntary means that it is adopted by people on the basis of their religion, which from a political point of view is voluntary, and not because various other forms of discrimination elsewhere in the social system make it rational and less costly for husband and wife to follow a gendered division of labor in the family<sup>19</sup>.

One of the main feminist criticisms to the Rawlsian theory of justice is that Rawls does not want to recognize that the family is part of the *basic structure of society*, nor does he recognize the important asymmetries that operate in it at times.

Nussbaum criticizes Rawls because his approach seems to stop before reaching what justice demands, persisting in his naive conception that we should allow the traditional division of labor by sex within families as long as it is *fully voluntary* and does not result from injustice or lead to it<sup>20</sup>; these words, as Nussbaum says, “are honorable but difficult to apply to reality”<sup>21</sup>, especially as they refer to issues related to the demands of childhood. The family is, in effect, for Rawls, part of his *basic structure of society*<sup>22</sup>, but as Nussbaum explains:

Children are its captives in all matters of basic survival and well-being for many years. Women are frequently its captives out of economic asymmetry. It is difficult to know whether anything children do in the family could be described as “fully voluntary”, and of course this is true for very many women also, especially those without independent sources of material support<sup>23</sup>.

Nussbaum’s theory of capacities would try to solve these problems by keeping the assessment of family love and the acknowledgments that this love allows<sup>24</sup>. And in any case, the model of Habermasian citizenship is very demanding and requires the empowerment of capacities, competencies, and skills. Now we talk about democratic quality and factual inequality that decreases the quality of citizenship.

I would add to the criticism of Nussbaum, pointing to the unreasonable Rawls’ intention of blaming religion for the sexual division of labor, through the strategy of saying that the division of labor is connected with basic freedoms, including freedom of religion. No matter how atheist the parents are, the fact is that while they are giving a feeding bottle to a child or when they are doing whatever of the many activities required by their breeding and education, it is very difficult to do

<sup>19</sup> J. Rawls, *The idea of public reason revisited*, “University of Chicago Law Review” 1997, Vol. 64, p. 792.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 765–807.

<sup>21</sup> M.C. Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>22</sup> J. Rawls, *op. cit.*, p. 391 seems to hesitate when he writes: “Even if the basic structure alone is the primary subject of justice, the principles of justice still put essential restrictions on the family and all other associations”.

<sup>23</sup> M.C. Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 370.

anything else, in the productive field, and religion is not to blame for this social demand to achieve generational replacement.

In sum, Rawls does not face his doctrine in a manner compatible with the preservation of a degree of space for personal choice in matters of love and care.

### 3. THE APROPRIATION OF EMOTIONAL, AFFECTIVE STRENGTH AND CARE CAPABILITIES OF WOMEN

It is a proven fact that, despite the general integration of women in the work market, a large number of them focus their personal fulfillment in the private sphere. Not surprisingly, the decision of having two or three children involves the sacrifice of women's paid work, and their professional expectations, not these of men, as a general rule<sup>25</sup>. And, except from cynicism, it cannot be opposed by the fact that, for a biological data, women are the only people who have children. Indeed, if a woman has to choose between her job and her family, she will probably choose her family. This idea is far from superficial, as Beauvoir already showed in his famous work<sup>26</sup>. Lipovetsky also reflected on this:

The orientation towards people constitutive of female socialization tends to make women refractory to the struggle for positions and power; it empties the search for power for its own sake of existential meaning and leads them, unlike men, to consider giving up their career if it interferes with their family life. (...) When the existential sense is identified primarily with the quality of the ties between people, building an industrial empire, elevating a group to the rank of world leader, ascending higher and higher in the circle of leaders are objectives that hardly impose themselves as primordial ideals, although it is not ignored, the desire for power is deprived of a deep meaning, since it is associated with a one-dimensional, dominant lifestyle, without emotional bond. If women show little fascination for the exercise of power, this is not only because social success is less prestigious for them than for men, but also because their socialization, based on the 'expressive' pole of personality, leads them to consider it vain to commit themselves to projects of domination and power. Even though the negative images associated with female combativeness are likely to explain in part the self-censorship that women express towards the conquest of power, the essential lies elsewhere. Rather than being psychological barriers (role conflicts,

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<sup>25</sup> In this sense, before the consequences of advanced capitalism were developed to show its worst face, reducing enormously the birth rate in Europe, the example, between middle-high class people, was women's necessity to choose between having a third child or being the General Director of the Company, because of the real impossibility of achieving both. It is also rightly said that at 8 p.m. many women prefer to choose to be at home with their children than to participate in a labor or political lobby.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. S. Beauvoir de, *Le deuxième sexe*, Paris 1949, Sp. ed. A. Martorell (transl.), *El segundo sexo*, Vol. 2: *La experiencia vivida*, pp. 420–421.



fear of asserting themselves, a defeminized image), the distant relationship that women maintain with power appears as the effect of a blockage of meaning, the inflation of private, communicational and expressive values, that devalue the existential sense of organizational dominance. [And furthermore], if women seem to be less motivated by a taste for risk, this is due, at least in part, to their private role, which does not encourage them as highly to rise and win. Obtaining fewer psychological benefits from success than men, women show less inclination to challenge the course of things and businesses<sup>27</sup>.

Some socialist and marxist sectors have advanced in the line of making visible the emotional attrition of most women<sup>28</sup>. The energies of women are consumed in jobs that provide pleasure and well-being to other people, usually men, and reinforce their status, and often these tasks are performed without being repaired and without being adequately rewarded. Women are, as Guerra Palmero explains, providers of trust and recognition, they feed the body and spirit of their men, and they serve as a refuge and a mirror to look at<sup>29</sup>. Freeing them to occupy more important and creative jobs, reinforcing their state or the surrounding environment, or providing them with sexual or emotional services, women suffers an emotional and affective attrition in favor of other people, without consideration or recognition, and always taken for granted. In practice, they end up being cooks, nurses, psychologists, sweepers, ironers, counselors, company ladies, and escorts<sup>30</sup>. Jónas-dóttir explains that, within the family, women are usually “exploited”. They give infinitely more than they receive:

The specific exploitation of women due to their sex-gender has to do with the transfer they make of a large proportion of their vital power. By vital power I mean the capacities and energies that are of crucial importance not only for the reproduction of the labor force, but also for the way in which women and men carry out or practice their social existence as sexual beings and, also, the way in which the different fields of the power of action are structured in society as a whole<sup>31</sup>.

Exploitation consists in the “appropriation” by men of the emotional and care resources provided by women. A worker is literally a *breadwinner*. The difference

<sup>27</sup> G. Lipovetsky, *La troisième femme*, Paris 1979, Sp. ed. R. Alapont (transl.), *La tercera mujer. Permanencia y revolución de lo femenino*, pp. 24, 273, 276. (The English translation is mine).

<sup>28</sup> S. Lee Bartky, *Feeding egos and tending wounds: Deference and disaffection in women's emotional labor*, (in:) S. Lee Bartky (ed.), *Femininity and domination: Studies in the phenomenology of oppression*, New York 1990; A. Ferguson, *Blood and the root: Motherhood, sexuality and male dominance*, London 1989; S. Firestone, *The dialectic of sex: The case for feminist revolution*, New York 1970; K. Millet, *Sexual politics*, New Jersey 1970, Sp. ed. A.M. Bravo García (transl.), *Política sexual*, México 1969.

<sup>29</sup> M.J. Guerra Palmero, *Mujer, identidad y reconocimiento. Habermas y la crítica feminista*, Tenerife 1998.

<sup>30</sup> A.M. Novales Alquézar, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–190.

<sup>31</sup> A.G. Jonasdóttir, *El poder del amor. ¿Le importa el sexo a la democracia?*, Madrid 1993, p. 141. (The English translation is mine).



between “paid work” and “domestic work” is established in popular language and in official statistics: the housewife’s tasks are not included in the official measurements on national productivity<sup>32</sup>. Jónasdóttir thinks of patriarchal love “as an exploitative relationship, where men appropriate more of women’s loving energies than they give in return”<sup>33</sup>.

In general, the marxist gender analysis<sup>34</sup> applies the concept of capitalist “exploitation” to marital relations and considers man with respect to woman in the capitalist position, from which he steals her over the years the results of her efforts<sup>35</sup>. However, as the organized feminist movement resurfaces, it focuses its attention on housework, and many socialist feminists initially assumed that what was called “domestic work”, broadly speaking, could be understood within the orthodox critique of marxism to capitalism. Pateman explains that this approach culminated in a series of aporia and that this subordination of women to men could not be directly subsumed in the subordination of the term “class”:

That the wife’s subjection derives from the fact that *she is a woman* has received acknowledgment, but the full political implications of patriarchal right remain obscured. (...) But ‘class’ and the ‘worker’ can wear the trousers (to borrow a formulation that philosophers are fond of using) in the ‘partnership’ between capitalism and patriarchy only because half the original contract is ignored. No hint is given that capitalism and class have been constructed as modern patriarchal categories<sup>36</sup>.

From her capabilities approach, Nussbaum also refers to the great cost of women’s emotional freedom that has supposed their exclusion from the process of constitution of the liberal state. Her long exposure is summarized in:

All too often women are not treated as ends in their own right, persons with a dignity that deserves respect from laws and institutions. Instead, they are treated as mere instruments of the ends of others –reproducers, caregivers, sexual outlets, agents of a family’s general prosperity. (...) But of course women’s problems are urgent in their own right, and it may be hoped that a focus on them will help compensate for early neglect of sex equality in development economics and in the international human rights movement<sup>37</sup>.

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<sup>32</sup> That is why it has been said that “marrying the maid destroys Gross Domestic Product”, since the act of getting married allows obtaining, free of charge, operations, activities and services that, without marriage, would have to be paid.

<sup>33</sup> L. Gunnarsson, A. Gracia Andrade, A.G. Jónasdóttir, *The power of love: Towards an interdisciplinary and multi-theoretical feminist love studies*, (in:) Eadem (eds.), *Feminism and the power of love: Interdisciplinary interventions*, London, New York 2018, p. 4.

<sup>34</sup> It consists, as it is known, in the feminist reconstruction of the production perspective of historical materialism.

<sup>35</sup> W. Leach, *True love and perfect union: The feminist reform of sex and society*, New York 1980; P. Rothenberg, *The political nature of relations between the sexes*, (in:) C. Gould (ed.), *Beyond domination: New perspectives on woman and philosophy*, New Jersey 1984.

<sup>36</sup> C. Pateman, *op. cit.*, pp. 34–35.

<sup>37</sup> M.C. Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 2, 7.

### 3.1. WOMEN AS EXPERTS IN THE “MATERNAJE” AND OTHER VALUABLE, FREE AND “TAKEN FOR GRANTED” JOBS INSIDE THE FAMILY

From the political theories of recognition, it is clear that identity is connected with production and not with reproduction. Honneth<sup>38</sup> agrees with Habermas to glimpse a theory of intersubjectivity spoiled by the productivist reduction of its concept of human identity, a reduction that has worked against women: by defining the activity of women as non-work, it has delved into the appropriate social conditions of its devaluation, depriving them the access to identity<sup>39</sup>. As Guerra Palmero writes: “Weavers of identities, spinners of relationships: an intersubjective work, which, like domestic work, is not ‘recognized’”<sup>40</sup>. Indeed, the links of the citizen’s role with the public sphere, with the official economy and with the family are forged, as Fraser points out, in the midst of male gender identity, and not in the middle of a gender neutral power<sup>41</sup>.

Apart from the domestic works of washing, shopping, cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, ironing, etc., women tend to take care of the logistics related to the proper functioning of the Home, they take care of children and elderly parents or other dependent relatives, and sometimes they are incorporated, to a greater or lesser degree, in other unpaid tasks as assistants in their husband’s work in all types of occupations. A wife, for example, contributes as an assistant to academic research of men, she acts as a hostess for the clients of a businessman<sup>42</sup>, answers the phone and keeps accounts if the husband owns a small business.

In any case, it is clear that the “jobs” that have been performed regularly by women inside the house, are left out of liberal “merit” and they can hardly be framed within the concept of “merit”.

<sup>38</sup> A. Honneth, *Lógica de la emancipación. El legado filosófico del marxismo*, “Debats” 1991, Vol. 37, p. 68.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. M.J. Guerra Palmero, *op. cit.*, p. 98.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 111. (The English translation is mine).

<sup>41</sup> N. Fraser, *¿Qué tiene de crítica la teoría crítica? Habermas y la cuestión de género*, (in:) S. Benhabib, D. Cornell (eds.), *Teoría feminista y teoría crítica*, Valencia 1990; N. Fraser, *Women, welfare, and the politics of need interpretation*, “Hypatia. A Journal of Feminist Philosophy” 1987, Vol. 2; N. Fraser, *Struggle over needs: Outline of a socialist-feminist critical theory of late capitalism political culture*, (in:) *Eadem, Unruly Practices*, Minnesota 1989, pp. 144–160, 161–191, respectively.

<sup>42</sup> And she will be judged if she doesn’t show “being up to the occasion”. Cf. T. Veblen, *Teoría de la clase ociosa*, Madrid 2014.

### 3.2. WOMEN AS IDENTITY BUILDERS, FREE WOUND HEALERS OF OTHERS AND FEEDERS OF OTHER PEOPLE'S EGOS

It is known that the prejudice of abstraction has systematically harmed women, and has achieved to keep them invisible<sup>43</sup>. The choice of abstraction as a starting point makes any significant verification of reality, of contexts, impossible<sup>44</sup>. As it's well known, the most abstract component of Rawls's theory of justice is the *original position*: In it some notes of an alleged neutral human nature are taken for granted, and they are incorporated as part of the initial situation. Moller Okin reacts to this matter and reconstructs the idea of Rawls on the *original position* as a reasoning process that takes into account all the particular positions and perspectives of society to arrive at the right result, and highlights the ability of those who reason morally to take into account each of the particular positions and points of view<sup>45</sup>.

As family is the element that ensures the emergence of individualities by making possible the recognition plot that underpins identity, Jónasdóttir, going beyond Fraser, wonders about this relational plot and the consequences of putting women at the service of the construction of the identity of others. Women provide "personalized" recognition helping to create and recreate identities, as they need "revisions" and "maintenance". However, they do not receive the same.

Along with the above, there is the problem that husbands sometimes require more domestic-emotional work than they contribute. Hartmann estimates that a husband generates almost eight hours of extra work per week<sup>46</sup>. In general, men are less aware of the emotional work that requires the maintenance of satisfactory personal relationships and leave this work to women with the excuse that they do it better. The work recently developed in the construction of the new masculinities, in the face of the traditional hegemonic masculinity model, focuses, among other difficulties for achieving real equality, on the collaboration of men in domestic work and related to the care of people. Luis Bonino, Director of the Center for the Male Condition of Madrid, has worked on the analysis of the

<sup>43</sup> A.G. Jonasdottir, *Opresión común y experiencias específicas. El problema de la abstracción y la concreción en teoría feminista*, (in:) A.G. Jonasdottir, *El poder...*, pp. 61–79.

<sup>44</sup> Cf. M.J. Matsuda, *La jurisprudencia liberal y visiones abstractas de la naturaleza humana: Una crítica feminista a la teoría de la justicia de Rawls*, M.E. Itxaso (transl.), (in:) P. Durán y Lalaguna et al. (eds.), *Debates sobre el género*, Castellón 1992, pp. 119–120.

<sup>45</sup> S. Moller Okin, *Women in western political thought*, Princeton 1978; S. Moller Okin, *Women and the making of the sentimental family*, "Philosophy and Public Affairs" 1982, Vol. 11, pp. 65–88; S. Moller Okin, *Are our theories of justice gender-neutral?*, (in:) R. Fullinwider, C. Mills (eds.), *The moral foundations of civil rights*, New Jersey 1986; S. Moller Okin, *Reason and feeling in thinking about justice*, "Ethics" 1989, Vol. 99, pp. 229–249.

<sup>46</sup> H.I. Hartmann, *The family as the locus of gender, class and political struggle: The example of housework*, "Signs. Journal of Women in Culture and Society" 1981, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 378–379, 382–383.

“micro politics of the development of inequitable relations” or “costs of inequality in the daily life of relations between women and men”<sup>47</sup>. In his opinion, the most interesting thing is that men do not tend to feel responsible for not doing what they should at home, in domestic, emotional or affective issues, and that it is based on the belief in the “right to do nothing”, that is, in the “right for her to do”. Bonino’s proposal requires men to self-reflect on the ethical assessment of that behavior, because that interpersonal resistance has an effect on women’s bodies and minds and constitutes an unfair and harmful overload for them. Bonino criticizes that most politically designed strategies do not take into account the de-responsibility of men in the domestic and affective spheres. All they do is relieve the traditional role of women. According to him, there is still an absence of policies targeted exclusively at men, with some exceptions such as the possibility of applying for paternity leave, applications that, in practice, have increased greatly in recent years.

With regard to affective work, some socialist and marxist approaches of thought have tried to make visible the emotional attrition of most women. In effect, the “mode of reproduction” will be defined not so much by a material production in the private sphere of the family (having children, making meals, doing household chores) but by an “emotional production” or “sexual-affective”. Ferguson talks about emotional production referring to the jobs that, traditionally, women have done as a spiritual nutrient or emotional support of their people, putting their interests below those of their family. Sandra Lee groups these emotional works into two metaphorical categories that she calls *feeding the egos* and *attending wounds*, referring to the emotional tasks covered by women to serve as a mirror or admirer of the male ego from their inferior position or to offer the support when their partners or children need to face a hostile world. However, this emotional work, far from enriching women, as some religious discourses defend<sup>48</sup>, impoverishes them.

And, as Lee Bartky, Ferguson, Firestone or Millet have seen, from a marxist perspective, there is an important extraction of surplus value (in favor of man) from these emotional works: women put much more than they receive and this is a permanent source of frustration for them (phenomena collected in some popular bestsellers books of recent years, such as *Women who love too much* or *Smart women, crazy elections*).

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<sup>47</sup> L. Bonino Méndez, *Hombres, conciliación y caminos hacia el cambio*, paper presented at the Conference in Zaragoza, January 2004, V Seminar of Women’s Studies “Voces y espacios femeninos”, Faculty of Philosophy and Letters, University of Zaragoza.

<sup>48</sup> But not others which place the root of the problem in the “ontological schism” of the opposition between the masculine and the feminine, when men and women have been created by God to be united in “reciprocal communion”. Cf. P. Evdokimov, *La donna e la salvezza del mondo*, Jaca Book 1983.

On the other hand, from the European socialist perspective of the Nordic countries, Jónasdóttir believes that: “The deficiencies of the socialists to find the key cause of the oppression of women *qua woman* in our western and democratic societies, are grouped around two errors that they commit in their approaches: first, their fixation on the concept of ‘work’ that encompasses too much and that, however, cannot account for other qualitatively different practices carried out by women and for which they are also exploited, and second, the excessive dependence that they give to the sex-gender systems with respect to the economical systems”<sup>49</sup>. For Jónasdóttir, patriarchy today is fundamentally sustained by the free sexual relations (which involve love, sex and care) that are established between ordinary couples in which women are exploited by men in a society where women need to love and be loved to qualify as persons – and as women – while men are already enabled as people and are not forced to grant their capacity for love to the other sex but in the precise conditions they want. The practice of “love”, which is how Jónasdóttir calls the whole of these everyday relationships that are established between the sexes, and which, in her opinion, have been overlooked by Anglo-American socialist feminists, cannot be labeled as “work” nor can be deduced from social economic systems. Jónasdóttir firmly believes that the organization of sexuality in our societies, in which men exercise the authority that gives them the “power of love”, exploiting the need that women have to love and be loved, is the main vector of oppression in women’s daily life, displacing work and economic determinations from their initial role<sup>50</sup>.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

In short, the freedom demanded by today’s democratic societies must be able to be translated into the practice in the conscious exercise of choice between a range of vital possibilities whose intrinsic value is not defined *a priori* without connection to the authenticity of the specific women and men who opt. Democracy requires that women can choose among several vital itineraries without manipulating their choice possibilities through sophisticated means of formal and informal social control.

<sup>49</sup> C. Molina Petit, *Debates sobre el género*, (in:) C. Amorós (ed.), *Feminismo y filosofía*, Madrid 2000, pp. 271–274.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. A.G. Jónasdóttir, *El poder...*; A.G. Jónasdóttir, *Feminist questions. Marx’s method and the theorization of ‘love power’*, (in:) A.G. Jónasdóttir, K.B. Jones (eds.), *The political interests of gender revisited: Redoing theory and research with a feminist face*, Manchester 2009, pp. 77–79; A.G. Jónasdóttir, *¿Qué clase de poder es el poder del amor?*, “Sociológica” 2011, Vol. 26, No. 74, pp. 261–266.

On the other hand, the exercise of choosing care of children or dependent persons and quality emotional attention to interpersonal relationships, require a social and political assessment in accordance with the value of the content of these functions, which consists in the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual support to people as the generational replacement and all that this implies, require collective responsibility, and not only women responsibility. In the same way, the emotional support of personal relationships must correspond equally to both sexes.

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