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Contemporary Forms of Micro-Resistance Exemplified by Motherhood Viewed in the Spirit of Radical Feminist Epistemology

Abstract: The paper shows the problem of the distorted image of motherhood and gender as institutions created by patriarchal society to marginalize women. The response to this is to be manifestations of micro-resistance undertaken by radical feminists. Based on the analysis of source texts, the author will try to show that being a mother is associated with social and political exclusion. Lack of respect and gender equality is the reason for taking the action of defiance, and therefore the attitude of disobedience.

Keywords: motherhood, radical feminism, standpoint theory, micro-resistance

Introduction

Following the first associations, the modern age appears as a utopia in which the needs of every individual, equality and respect for rights are sought, irrespective of status, gender or race, for example. Contrary to accepted appearances, it can also be said today that divisions exist and are even being exacerbated. This article aims to look at contemporary forms of resistance from the perspective of the epistemology of radical feminism on the example of motherhood. In doing so, the article addresses the issue of motherhood as a phenomenon that significantly restricts a woman's rights, discriminates, and coercively places her in society. The researcher's hypotheses are whether women are immediately

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disadvantaged by childbirth from the perspective of political participation, how the current patriarchal system defines the experience of motherhood, whether current understandings of motherhood aim to limit women's rights, and how motherhood should look from a radical feminist perspective. The paper is intended to be of a discursive nature, meaning that, based on the texts of selected researchers presented, the author will address the hypotheses posed therein and draw her own conclusions. The article is divided into the following parts. In the first part, the author introduces what gender is and how it can be classified. This is followed by a characterisation of feminist epistemology and the situatedness theory it contains. The third part of the thesis presents an image of motherhood from the perspective of radical feminism and the forms of resistance that women undertake to combat discrimination and establish equality. This is to analyse in depth the issue addressed and to look at each component that influences the attitudes to motherhood discussed.

From a woman's perspective, motherhood begins when the child is born. However, it also begins when the woman finds out that she is pregnant, above all because she assumes all the responsibilities and duties she undertakes for the healthy development of the child. Examples include good nutrition, the exclusion of stimulants and mindfulness in daily activities. This also shows that motherhood is associated above all with duty and responsibility in the care of her offspring. M. Yopo Diaz views motherhood in retrospect. She believes that modern motherhood has changed in terms of which time of being pregnant, postpartum, and maternity leave is separated. In turn, in women's minds, the time associated with motherhood refers to before pregnancy, during pregnancy and after pregnancy. As the author notes this has a strictly heterogeneous meaning. The perceived discomfort heightened by the comparison of specific stages in life is justified by the biologism resulting from different bodily predispositions, whereby maternity refers to the instinctive role a woman is supposed to hold (Yopo Diaz, 2018, p. 2). With changes in civilisation and economic progress, the definition of motherhood is evolving and changing its meaning, especially among young women. In many cases, higher education and the subsequent pursuit of professional success are leading women to postpone motherhood or to give it up altogether (McQuillan, Greil, Scheffler, Tichenor, 2008, p. 3). A paternalistic view of the value of the family is not infrequently linked to culture or religion. Religious doctrines include in their content slogans orienting towards family formation. It is often faith that provides the justification for a particular division of roles, which today would be described as stereotypical. This does not mean that only women of faith choose to become mothers. Nowadays, the role of mother can be treated as just as important as, for example, that of working. It can be treated as a challenge for a woman to share her professional work and that of childcare (McQuillan, Greil, Scheffler, Tichenor, 2008, p. 10). This approach can be seen, for example, in the slogans of liberal feminists. On the opposite side is radical

feminism, which sees motherhood as a form of enslavement. Undoubtedly, to better understand the rationale behind radical feminists forms of dissent, it will be appropriate to use Standpoint Theory, where, by analysing cultural contexts, the social roles taken on or environmental conditions, it will be possible to understand and explore the location of their motives.

Feminism is first and foremost a response, a form of opposition to the reality created by the patriarchal system. Whether one lives in a conservative society such as Afghanistan or in a more liberal worldview, as exemplified by France, discrimination against women can be seen in both geographical locations. In the case of Afghanistan, one speaks of a restriction in basic rights, whereas in Western European countries, the problem is one of worldview, opposition to generalisation and systemic residues, of which the male point of view was a pillar. Importantly, however, the crux of the matter lies in the divisions themselves.

The meaning of gender

Diversification primarily means differentiation, variety, or multiplicity. In the case of the division of the sexes, it derives from cultural considerations, i.e. products of the human imagination, but also those arising from biology. The division resulting from nature means that a being at birth possesses a certain set of characteristics that distinguishes it from other individuals. Gender is mainly justified by biologism through this premise. Undoubtedly, a child on the day of birth is assigned a sex by virtue of its physical characteristics, but it is this sex that is the subject of the most frequent speculation and the bone of contention in public debate. On one side are those who consider gender to be a product of nature, which created this undeniable division. In this case, it is also believed that the characteristics that are perceived as feminine in the discourse depend only on biology. The second strand sees gender as a cultural construct, where the patriarchal axiological system, deepened over the years, has placed women in a subordinate and weaker position. Although in the discourse, it is mainly the female gender that has been positioned as the inferior one, men are also often positioned within a generalised symbol of the male as the strong, decisive head of the family and the holder of authority in many spheres, where in fact he does not necessarily want to exercise such a role.

From a biological point of view, sex is a set of characteristics that distinguish male from female individuals. Here, in terms of physical characteristics, there is a classification into two groups. They are not broken down into further subgroups, which means that the physiology of the organism is responsible for whether an individual can think of themselves as female or male. This definition is the simplest, but it is also far removed from the cultural understanding of gender, although it should be noted that the biological understanding of gender is

also influenced by cultural developments. In science, because of the rise of feminist currents, the word corresponding to biological gender was singled out as sex and cultural gender as gender. What gender studies focuses on is the opposition to contemporary generalisation, the devotion to stereotypes, inequality, conservative dialectics, a deep division between feminine and masculine and the adoption of a misguided scientism, under the pretext of justifying trivial slogans with biological sciences (Pankowska, Chomczyńska-Rubacha, 2016, p. 15). At birth, the infant is instilled with role models that fall into a stereotypical understanding of roles, depending on which gender he or she is assigned to. Thus, through upbringing, a specific personality is constructed in the child, which will fit into the accepted trend. However, the problem lies not in the family itself, but in the institutionalised machine that is the state. From an early age, people are socialised, which means that they take on the characteristics of their environment. Children are already grouped into boys and girls in kindergarten. The very allocation of toys such as dolls or small cars classifies them into separate realities, into female and male. Toys for boys often carry the cultural code of the archetype of the strong man, whose interests lie in motorisation, construction, or manual work. Looking at products aimed at girls, one can see that already as future women they are assigned to the role of housekeeper, interested in fashion or fields that, when translated into reality, do not require them to prove their physical strength. Of course, such theses do not necessarily translate into the future, but what manifestations of gendered culture children experience does project onto their later movement in social spaces. K. Deaux has noted that women displaying traits attributed to men are recognised as assertive and apodictic in the workplace. However, on the other hand, they are often rejected from the community of women who fit more into cultural patterns (Kornaszewska-Polak, 2020, p. 36). It also shows that culture is often the product of reproduced stereotypes, which, through its many products, reinforce this perception of reality.

M.L. Gattens points out that gender divisions are born out of the family. The average family is a factory of cultural transmission. It places each of its members in a specific role, prepares them to function efficiently in society and especially the descendants in their future households. The moment of disruption to domestic harmony was when women gradually gained rights, when establishing a family did not become an end, but a life of independence, where financial independence and education came first (Gattens, 1993, p. 37). Roles instilled from the first days of birth translate into later social patterns. The patriarchal nature of the system is illustrated by the role model of father and daughter. The institution of the family also has a hierarchy formed. The father holds the highest position, he is decisive in relation to the members and above all the daughters. The daughter, in this case, assumes the position of an obedient, less important individual whose opinion does not come to the fore (Gattens, 1993, p. 53). It is a self-perpetuating trend when daughters become wives, mothers in the future, but the

patterns instilled remain, no matter what stage of life one is in, a woman will always be, in a metaphorical but also direct sense, 'her father's daughter'.

At this point, it is worth reflecting on the image of men in the Western culture. Well, the stereotypes circulating around gender diversification also affect those to whom, contrary to appearances, the system has been assigned. This is bluntly illustrated by a study conducted by Oransky and Marecek, to which boys attending school were subjected. Each of them had to experience a confrontation with peers during which a fight took place. The respondents stated that in such a situation they tried not to show their feelings or show that they had suffered physical harm. The attitude adopted was to show the group that they were behaving in a masculine manner. Behaviour indicative of feeling pain was subject to derision from those around them (Lisi, 2015, p. 59). These widespread disparities can be seen in pop culture, particularly in films or advertising. The Marlboro commercial has gone viral, becoming known as the best in the history of broader marketing. The short film depicts a cowboy crossing the plains on horseback. As the epitome of masculine virtues, the cowboy pulls out a cigarette, which immediately becomes a symbol of the strength and bravado ascribed to his nature. In this advertisement, the text proclaimed by the narrator is no less important:

You don't see many wild stallions anymore. No, you don't see many wild anymore. And even if he did run off three of your best mares, he's one of the last of a wild and very singular breed. Come to where the flavour is, come to Marlboro Country. (Marlboro Country Commercial, 1968, available at: <https://youtu.be/yKuNghi2m0?si=7S2pySjlazFPJbsp>)

The advertising makes it clear to the observer that using their brand's products will make any man feel special, in a way returning to the instinctive sources of being where strength matters most. Such an image, however, was not created without reason. Marlboro filter cigarettes had previously been aimed at women, so the company could not be indifferent to an audience that might not be in the majority, but which had the most say. Therefore, a cowboy character was created who, as an independent man, chose filter cigarettes (Król, 2023, available at: <https://truestory.pl/marlboro-man-najlepsza-kampania-w-historii-reklamy/>). The company wanted to get rid of the stereotype affecting it, as the brand's products were intended only for women. In doing so, they wrote themselves into pop culture and the collective consciousness by promoting a trend that could be harmful not only because of the nature of their product, but above all by creating a single, untrue, and categorised male role model, which was followed not only by men, but also by women.

On the other hand, the stereotype of women as caretakers, mothers of children and wives is also overused in product advertising. One example is a TV commercial for the product Vanish. In the footage, the main character, a mother

of two children, prepares sandwiches, plays with her sons, and does the laundry. The woman speaks as follows:

Having children changes your life. With my little boys, my hands are full. I do not have a lot of time in my day and I can't spend it washing clothes. I used to waste time looking for stains. Now I use one lid of Vanish Napisan. Oxi power lift formula uses thousands of active oxygen bubbles lift even the most difficult of stains, giving me more time for the things I love. Vanish – trust pink, forget stains. (*Vanish Napisan Oxi Action Powder Testimonial Ad*, 2012, available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zh8r-1QOurc>)

The film portrays the woman in a stereotypical way as a mother of children and caretaker of the household. She is shown multitasking, but only in terms of housework, cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children. One can conclude that the everyday life of the heroine is presented, but her husband, her partner, does not appear in any passage. This reinforces the impression that she alone is responsible for household chores. The protagonist points out that working on the house, takes away time she could spend with her family. To her rescue, however, comes a detergent that will only reduce the time she spends on laundry. The narrative of the ad also shows that the most important goal a woman strives for is to spend time with her loved ones. This is a very shallow portrayal of a woman for whom motherhood is the most important role that gives her a sense of fulfilment. There is no mention at least of the fact that the protagonist also combines work with family life. Another detail, but also important, is the design of the product. The packaging of Vanish detergent is striking, its entire space is filled with the colour pink, which makes it even more obvious that it is aimed at female consumers.

It is not only corporations that promote an androcentric social system in their marketing campaigns. The phallogocentric cult manifests itself first and foremost in a culture where individuals who step outside the box are placed on the margins. The cult of the body became a symbol of desire and, for the voices of dissent, an archetype of submission and limitation. An important theory was put forward by M. Foucault, who focused on the meaning of subjectivity in the context of the body's relationship with power. According to the French philosopher, the defined human body is a tool for controlling influence by those in power. The operation of conventions, the establishment of norms assigned to specific groups of people, the creation of patterns, including those tailored to gender, gives the sovereign the power to create his or her own reality, underpinned by the laws he or she has established (Organista, 2010, p. 131). Gender would be nothing in politics if it were not for consciousness, the soul, which can be described as a psychological interpretation of identity, rooted in biological corporeality. This can be seen in the pronatalist policies of states. Keeping citizens within a gender framework, ensures the state's continued demographic, but also,

above all, economic development. Parental leave, social benefits, family allowances are supposed to improve the birth rate and encourage family formation. Such measures also define people in terms of their gender and what roles they are expected to perform.

Freud, on the other hand, defines gender in the sense of psychoanalysis in the cultural context, but also in the biological sciences. According to him, man is defined from the moment of birth by his gender. He does not see it from the perspective of acquired reproductive capacities, but of sexuality, which is rooted in the human psyche. He himself draws the conclusion that an awareness of reproduction is acquired in the teenage years. What suppresses the drives in childhood and adolescence is upbringing, that is, the influence of the rules imposed by society. As in M. Foucault's work, the state, the environment has a socialising function, but it shapes individuals in its own rights by manipulating their sexuality. However, a significant difference is that the author of *Wstęp do psychoanalizy* regards such upbringing as necessary, otherwise cultural achievements would be abolished in favour of instincts (Freud, 2003, p. 288). The state needs to shape people axiologically so that it focuses on work to provide an economic base, in turn it should then guide people to reproduce in order to thereby control demographics. Freud himself, however, places the male gender above, claiming that girls growing up live with the idea that their gender is frumpy. This is supposed to reflect a search for equivalents in the form of family involvement or simple jealousy, due to the lack of those qualities possessed by men (Freud, 2003, p. 290).

R. Connell in *Socjologia płci. Płeć w ujęciu globalnym* takes the side of theorists who see gender as the resultant of progressive cultural development. She refers to the gaining of awareness of which gender criteria we place ourselves in as gender identity. This means that gender is not acquired at birth, but at the moment of adolescence, i.e. increased socialisation. Importantly, however, according to the researcher, it is not society that imposes principles, but people themselves, who have the need to ascribe to a particular group in order to derive values from it, in the form of roles and responsibilities associated with it (Connell, 2013, p. 22). However, it cannot be denied that the reproduced, often damaging patterns that are the choices of individuals translate into later generations who, it can be argued, make the decision passively. Society is mainly responsible for the mythologisation of gender, the creation of beliefs based on gender differences, based primarily on reproductive issues. Thus, it can be concluded that what societies rely on is the problem of conception and then childbirth. Connell points out that the dominance of the masculinist system has been influenced by globalisation. The emergence of large international markets, and with it corporations, forced managements to create a certain business model, one based on the predominance of male power in management. The same applies to the development of the media. Although the media are also a source of freedom slogans,

through advertising and the free broadcasting of programmes on various topics, they can reproduce damaging patterns that present an idealised version of women as well as men (Connell, 2013, p. 216).

Feminist epistemology and Standpoint Theory

Feminism has for a relatively short period of time become a field of study that is looked upon more favourably by the academy. Although there are examples in history of civilisations based on matriarchy, patriarchy is the dominant system that places women in a discriminated group. A certain way of behaving, socially accepted family models, assignment to specific roles or even the creations of art and manifestations of culture in the broadest sense have concretised the woman, locking her into the narrow confines of accepted conventions. It is impossible to say whether one gender is better or worse in terms of its characteristics. What particularly influences the content of the constructed system is undoubtedly the civilisational cultural heritage. Culture and biology as key factors in the emergence of gender disparities are subjected to particular analysis by the current of feminist epistemology. Feminist epistemology nevertheless does not only focus on the dualism of biology and culture, but also on the space for the creation of theories that only certain individuals have the power to create, as N.A. Michna points out. This means that, depending on the conditions in which one grows up and lives, the chosen person will have a real impact on the character and qualities of the theory he or she creates (Michna, 2018, p. 129). The author cites E. Anderson's definition of feminist epistemology as the study of gendered influences on science and accepted dogmas of knowledge. Harding, on the other hand, delineates the relationship in the world between the subject exploring knowledge and the object being explored (Michna, 2018, p. 129). What feminist scholarship initially focused on was the comparison of differences between the position of women in Western cultural countries and in other cultures (Kruszelnicki, 2010, p. 32). In the context of the study of culture, which is so important for the development of feminist science, anthropology also has a special place. This field of science defines exactly what gender is, drawing on knowledge from the observation of culture, the customs of ethnic or national minorities, the analysis of social roles assigned to age or the specificity of one's place in social class. Feminist anthropology is one of the few currents that has started to investigate what exactly gender is and what factors are involved in its formation (Kruszelnicki 2010, p. 35).

A. Derra sees as the main objective of feminism the declassification of the fundamentalisms brought to humanity by a culture that assumes the character of a male role model. What is understood as female identity is absent from the

reality shared between the two sexes, and feminism therefore faces the task of creating a new image of women in the context of their subjectivity. Feminism, however, is first and foremost a set of sciences that draws on fields such as psychology, sociology, history and political science to define the social position of women and to clarify what discrimination manifests itself and what has led to it (Derra, 2022, p. 35). Nevertheless, feminism should not be looked at in terms of the phenomenon of discrimination alone, as this, the author believes, can lead to a hasty fundamentalism that shuts out a broader analysis of the problem. The idea of the subject is contradicted by postmodernism, which includes in its dogmas the observation that defining the subject can lead to abuse by the state, as such an individual is easier to manipulate (Derra, 2022, p. 43). There is no escaping the fact that the definition of subjectivity largely lies within the boundaries of culturality. Derra rightly cites an interesting comparison by Deleuze and Guattari, where they cite the example of a person who adopts a nomadic mode. A person who is constantly changing his or her place of residence is unable to penetrate the structures he or she finds in one location because he or she will soon change to another. This approach is also supposed to concern biology, specifically the approach to corporeality, within which difference is not a sphere of fixed beliefs, but a space in which differences are seen as a natural fact of life (Derra, 2022, p. 45). Feminist epistemology is primarily concerned with the fact that regardless of geographical location, women living in different regions face the same problem of marginalisation. It aims not to be a mere appendix to a certain branch of science, but an isolated scientific field (Narayan, 2004, p. 45).

J. Butler considers women's subjectivity in the category of political participation. Politics empowers, and at the same time emancipates, but the associated implementation of a set of rights, benefits stakeholders, but at the same time also deprives them of some. This means that feminist movements gain equality in aspects that guarantee them rights, but then they are also discriminated against on other levels (Butler, 1994/1995, p. 59). This can be seen, for example, in the case of maternity leave in Poland. A woman is entitled to 20 weeks' maternity leave after giving birth. On the one hand, this is a manifestation of the right change on the labour market, the mother does not have to worry about losing her job, as she is legally entitled to days off to care for her child and can in turn return to her profession after this period. When you look at it from the other side, a woman is entitled to considerably longer leave than her partner. Paternity leave can last a maximum of six weeks. While this is a good step towards the division of social gender roles, the inequality can be seen in the fact that the woman gets to look after the child for longer, which also means that she takes a longer break from work. While it is true that a woman can end her leave earlier, this example is meant to point out the inequalities that arise in the creation of laws that, on the one hand, are necessary and beneficial, but also, on the other hand, keep women in a more culturally accepted role as mothers.

In feminist epistemology, particular attention is paid to the role of experience on the formulation of the field. However, one cannot succumb to a certain simplification here by considering that feminism is only based on theories shaped by experience. All currents in philosophy draw on the observations of their thinkers, and therefore basing science on conclusions drawn from the perceptions of researchers is most appropriate. N.A. Michna distinguished areas of experience that are differentiated by gender. First of all, how the figure of a woman is created in society depends on culture, the position taken in society, race and religious factors. Western culture is based on a single male role model, which immediately places the woman in a different, inferior position. Also the entire scientific heritage, the accepted norms have been shaped in a phallogocentric culture, which means that women's cultural achievements are in a minority (Michna, 2018, p. 219).

The current that deals with experience as a major factor in the formation of feminist science has been termed feminist empiricism. The main object of observation here is external factors that impinge on women's experiences and how they are perceived in society. Therefore, the thesis of feminist empiricism is that inequalities between women and men are the result of beliefs and cultural acquisitions. Equality, on the other hand, is a good that transcends gender, race or class, which everyone is entitled to (Gasztold, 2019, p. 153). A. Hensholdt, in opposition, put forward the theory of K. Knight Abowitz, who identified that pragmatism in research methodology can bring many advantages. First and foremost, it is able to explore factors arising from differences over a large collective. This, however, as the researcher points out, draws all the more attention to social disparities, which then support divisions and classifications (Hensholdt, 2019, p. 12). It is difficult to disagree with this observation. Empiricism in research aims to analyse as many cases as possible from a qualitative point of view, i.e. it involves examining experiences, insights and drawing conclusions that are universal to observation. By asking the participants in a research group about their experiences, we are likely to get many different answers, which in some respects may overlap. However, this does not change the fact that this diversity in responses leads the researcher to carry out a certain classification. It also means that the study of women may also lead to divisions among their gender group. On the other hand, a pragmatic approach in research can show in how many spheres women experience discrimination, which leads to a broadening of knowledge that gives the greatest insight into the areas around which feminism can revolve. Research from an experiential perspective also allows us to look at women's problems individually and to focus on problems that affect women within, for example, their ethnic, racial or religious groups.

In line with feminist epistemology is Standpoint Theory, the characteristics of which were explored by Sandra Harding in a work also similarly titled *The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader: Intellectual and Political Controversies*.

Standpoint Theory, by design, was to revolutionise previous scholarship as it situated women against the backdrop of political systems and relationships. That is, the search for factors of women's marginalisation was grounded in historical, social and state processes (Harding, 2004, p. 6). As Harding noted, point of view theory, by combining the natural sciences together with the humanities, has made it possible to give women subjectivity. Limiting the problem only to a social issue would be detrimental to male and female citizens, as it would define the issue unidimensionally, thereby downplaying discrimination, which is always multidimensional. However, it is debatable whether the science popularised by viewpoint theory applies to the situation of women from every part of the globe, or whether every culture involves similar experiences of its female members. Also, the idea of science is to produce facts that are beyond events, they are supposed to be universal regardless of periods in history that looked different from region to region (Harding, 2004, p. 6). However, as S. Ruddick shows, the idea of Standpoint Theory is to defy existing research methodologies, as it is intended to focus on the relationships that exist in society (Ruddick, 2004, p. 163). Following N. Harstock's thinking, Ruddick sees the basis of this theory in the idea of work, of women in the role of mother and carer of the home. Thus, the function of the carer is both dominated by a patriarchal culture, in which the very merits associated with the idea of helping are erroneously attributed to masculinity, thus overlooking its etymology ascribed to motherhood (Ruddick, 2004, p. 166). Point of view theory here shows not only the female carer as a certain family model or gender-assigned set of characteristics. Understanding caregiving from a female perspective is an allegory for a peaceful, compromising and sustainable policy. By doing so, this approach in the methodology is also meant to introduce a new way for the state to be governed, taking into account the hitherto neglected needs of women.

Standpoint Theory and feminist philosophy itself owe their origins to Marxist thought. Socialism as well as feminism focused on groups oppressed by the larger collective. It allowed women to be viewed from the perspective of not only mothers and wives, but primarily working people who contribute financially to the household (Harding, 2004, p. 9). Equally important is the idea of taking collective action to break the constraints and liberate the oppressed group, in this case women. In both Marxism and feminism, movements of resistance are collective in nature, where opposition is directed towards dominant groups, the bourgeoisie or patriarchal society.

Situation theory seeks to explore the impact of ethnic, religious, gender, class or nationality divisions, the presence of which diversifies to the benefit of wealthy groups of privileged individuals for whom examples of marginalisation are a factor in their livelihoods (Kruszelnicki, 2010, p. 33). Importantly, the researchers here can themselves be the objects of study. By contributing knowledge supported by experience, the nature of a social group, its habits and the problems

it faces can be determined. Objectivity and self-criticism are to be the prerequisites in order to be able to conclude that the content brought to public scrutiny is as true as possible (Kruszelnicki, 2010, p. 34). It is also accurate to say here that the significant number of experiences introduced into scientific discourse influences the construction of these new currents in science. In other words, the variety of analyses corroborated by the experiences of people from different backgrounds provides the largest and most possible view of the problems of marginalised groups, which also proves that point-of-view theory is the most appropriate in the study of feminism and beyond. The distinguishing feature of the positioning point, placing it in contrast to previous research methodologies, is the influence of politics, a social system that makes a real difference to the lives of individuals and determines the position occupied in society.

The viewpoint is based on certain theses, which include the situated knowledge thesis and the epistemic privilege thesis. The first is that the wisdom that everyone receives comes from their surroundings, the environment in which they grew up and the events of which they were a part. The second position, on the other hand, asserts that certain points of view, especially of marginalised groups, are cognitively privileged (Cipriani, 2020, p. 5). As also indicated earlier in the paper, point of view theory is defined by experience, which acts as a research tool. In this case, documented experiences become a compendium of knowledge. Epistemic privilege is divided into three assumptions, where it is believed that, using the example of oppressed groups, one can see the dependencies that exist in the structures of the manor, inequalities are the result of socio-environmental conditions, and in turn the world picture is a network of connections and interests (Cipriani, 2020, p. 8). Epistemic privilege implies that the individual who experiences manifestations of marginalisation must also find himself in the world of the dominant group. That is, he or she is part of the world in its general sense, but belongs to a local collectivity. The point of view theory is then fully realised, when the subject is a certain, distinct community, which is aware of its difference, can determine to what extent it is discriminated against and by whom, has precise goals and puts on a pedestal the cultural characteristics which prove its difference (Cipriani, 2020, p. 9).

In the context of situatedness theory, one finds the figure of the mother, whose previous life changes in a revolutionary way with the birth of her child. Situated within the patriarchal systemic machine, women beyond the age of adolescence are confronted with the social expectations of starting a family. Undoubtedly, what informs feminist epistemology are the experiences that each woman gains from having a child. As B.J. Miller-McLemore points out, the experience of motherhood and fatherhood are not identical. Going through pregnancy and then giving birth triggers markedly different experiences, not only the physical ones, such as those associated with experiencing pain, but also the psychological ones, which immediately place her in a different position from

that of the father of the child (Miller-McLemore, 1992, p. 231). The reality that a woman encounters when becoming a mother is often far removed from what she initially imagined. This is another aspect that patriarchal culture has created, namely the myth of parenthood. Motherhood is presented as the most important goal, where caring for a child does not require sacrifice. However, childbirth involves the birth of a human being, who is not yet socialised, whose behaviour is unconditional and instinctive. This raises the problems of combining work and care, of sharing responsibilities between parents, and of maintaining one's own habits and private life. The relationship between mother and child is distorted and does not reflect reality (Miller-McLemore, 1992, p. 236). Although feminist epistemology was formed out of the need to abolish inequalities arising from differences, it is these differences that constitute the knowledge of cognition and allow us to scientifically define the knowledge that can be drawn from motherhood.

Image of motherhood

The perspective of the woman-mother has gained new meaning over the years, above all from radical feminism. The hitherto inviolable archetype of the homemaker has taken on the image of a discriminated person, assigned to a single role, for whom the outside world may prove too unobvious and overburdening to fit in. Feminism has come out in favour of such generalisation, categorising motherhood as a systemic tool to leave women in the shadow of major political developments. The image of the mother as a cultural product appears as a woman who devotes her life to her child, abandoning what she has achieved so far. E. Badinter believes that the modern image of the mother was influenced not only by the classified role of the father, as a punisher, judge or boundary setter, but also by a view of the child that took on new meaning in the 18th century. Here, the author takes a closer look at J.J. Rousseau's work entitled *Emile*, or on parenting, which influenced the later positioning of the child as a significant member of the family. Until the late eighteenth century, there was a belief that people of a child's age, should be brought up in a cold manner. This became so widespread that it was necessary to develop the profession of *mamma*, who immediately after birth received the newborn child from its biological mother, fed it and looked after it (Badinter, 1998, p. 86). Demography also influenced the change in attitude. Societies recognised the negative effects of child mortality, and each newborn child began to be seen as future purchasing power for the state, which counted in every number. The aim was to raise a valuable citizen who would contribute to the economic growth of their society. With this, the idea of breastfeeding and staying in this state with the child for the longest time created a new image of the mother as a caring, nurturing and valuable parent (Badinter, 1998, p.

108). The changes were undoubtedly significant. Already at the beginning of the nineteenth century, the use of mammothers had become not only out of fashion, but above all not recommended, for hygienic, but also for moral reasons. Women were urged to make new sacrifices, believing that a child fully cared for in the privacy of the home would be physically healthy. A woman deciding to have a child was burdened with her first responsibilities already during pregnancy, which included, for example, maintaining a proper diet in order to provide her body with the necessary ingredients (Badinter, 1998, p. 150). M. Foucault relates the mother–child relationship to a sexually motivated power relationship. The family as the basic unit of society is a hierarchical relationship of connections at the level of husband–wife, parent–child, mother–child, elder–younger. Desire and its consequences sought to be structured. Foucault referred to the trend that focused on the female body from the 18th century onwards as the hysterization of the body. The female body was over-sexualised, and in order to cope with this, the focus was primarily on what essential functions resulted from this and what to limit the excessive emanation of promiscuity. As a result, the woman was expected to focus on the family, especially on raising offspring (Foucault, 1995, p. 93). However, as radical feminists point out, gender biologism and justifying the desire for a family with it should not be the case. The desire in some women to have offspring is the result of pressures from society, instilled from an early age. There is also the argument that newborn children could be cared for by any other adult not related to them. Such an upbringing would have a more beneficial effect, as the relationship was based not on a socially instilled bond of blood, but of attachment and friendship (Dobrowolska, 2016, p. 167). Thus, radical feminism does not deny the need for demographic growth, but dissociates itself from the link between motherhood and biologism. The implementation of, for example, foster families would allow women to become more involved in politics or professional development. However, a less controversial, yet radical, method is the creation of educational institutions that could care for children from a very early age.

The common image of women has been influenced by the teachings of the Catholic Church. The clergy teach the faithful that a woman's purpose is to care for her offspring, to realise herself as a mother. Girls as young as a few years old are already marked by this responsibility (Graff, 2014, p. 33). The church's conservative approach to the issue of corporeality, and its attempt to limit women's rights, influenced the formation of a radical feminism with a critical approach to motherhood.

Motherhood is synonymously perceived with devotion, alienation, sacrifice or renunciation. However, not surprisingly, not only the teachings of the church, but also pronatalist policies burden women with parental responsibilities without giving them adequate space for development and rest. Financial benefits, parental leave are undoubtedly very helpful, but they are tools that do not affect the

full empowerment of women themselves. What should be particularly emphasised is the provision of early childhood education facilities that are fully public, pursuing a housing policy so that housing prices are realistic for every citizen to buy, taking care of the health system, above all a full package of examinations during pregnancy. Another aspect is to change the rhetoric in the public space so that citizens are not assigned to specific roles. The negative perception of motherhood, as he points out, is due to the policies pursued by right-wing parties. Mainly these parties base their dialectics on emotional expressions, oscillating around the notion of communal collectivism (Graff, 2014, p. 42). In left-wing circles, including feminists, the word has taken on a negative connotation. Although so natural, and so necessary for each individual, the family has become a political creation that women want to run away from. Unfortunately, it should also be noted that if such patterns and beliefs did not exist in society, politicians would not be grasping for these words in order to gain the greatest possible audience. It can be argued that the media statements of those in power are a mirror of what citizens want to hear. Even if certain homes describe themselves as liberal, the mother will always remain a mother in the way she is perceived when one reads the word, i.e. caring, nurturing, ready to make sacrifices, for example when it is necessary to take a day off work when a child becomes ill.

Although it is undeniable that the family is necessary for the functioning of societies, L. Irigaray demonstrates that it too has been vindicated by the patriarchal order. The requirement of a woman's fulfilment in motherhood and, above all, the delivery of an offspring into the world is meant to serve as an extension of the privileges that come with being a man. The son is intended to be an extension of the exercise of the functions that the father has exercised (Irigaray, 2010, p. 69). It can therefore be concluded that motherhood, a most feminine aspect, which should theoretically depend on the woman herself, is subordinated to the man and his decision-making. Being a mother is then reduced to the need to reproduce and to look after the home. As the years go by, the playing field is levelling out, if only through the spread of contraception (Irigaray, 2010, p. 70). Although medicine has made it possible to control the birth rate, so that women can equalise their opportunities, for example on the labour market, it is nevertheless worrying that motherhood has taken on a pejorative meaning and that the decision to have children is judged from the perspective of subordination and subsequent consequences. Unsurprisingly, although the world is now moving towards liberalisation, women may still experience the problem of discrimination and a subjective approach from, for example, the social system. This situation has led radical feminists to fully criticise the idea of motherhood as a political creation designed to make them fully dependent on their partners, depriving them of their right to individualism, financial independence or also cultural independence.

The image of motherhood from the perspective of radical feminists also received a lot of criticism. One of the main and significant comments was that the representatives of this group did not analyse perspectives according to cultural background in their approach to the role of mother. These differences in dialogue became a reason for substantive conflict. Femininity and masculinity also acquired a dual character (Dagdelen, 2018, p. 104). This can be interpreted to mean that there has been a certain separation, between women who see motherhood as their own goal and are fully committed to it, and those who deny the idea of being a mother and oppose the established order. A similar relationship applies to men. Some support the traditional family model, while others choose partnership.

Transnational feminism became not only a topic for radical feminists to explore, but also an approach that was in opposition to it. Women who had to migrate due to the poor economic situation in their country were not supported by their destination countries. Often separated from their children, they needed to be close to them, to realise their role as mothers (Dagdelen, 2018, p. 111). In consensus with the values drawn from radical feminism and respect for motherhood stands moderate feminism. On the one hand, like its radical variant, it demands a change of attitude in society, the receding of the patriarchal system and partnerships, but it also values motherhood and its role (Ziemińska, 2013, p. 59).

Feminism and forms of micro-resistance

Opposition to the phallogocentric approach to motherhood, was also manifested in numerous forms of resistance to present the perspective of radical feminists, and at the same time bring changes to the system of social relations. C. Beyer points to the increasingly common phenomenon of matrophobia among women. The main contributor to this was the attribution of motherhood to biology, and thus interpreting it as the need to become a mother, which was supposed to stem from innate instincts (Beyer, 2019, p. 2). Matrophobia does not in itself mean fear of one's own mother or motherhood, but of the process that leads to divesting oneself of one's personality in favor of giving up one's offspring. The period of pregnancy and then of caring for a child is seen as the moment when a woman ceases to see herself as an individual, but as part of a system whose life is henceforth to be viewed through the prism of being a mother (Alahmari, 2018, p. 128). Matrophobia derives from the anger of a daughter who does not accept the positioning of her parent within a certain framework of accepted conventions, and at the same time does not want her future life to look the same way. A. Rich justifies this approach on the grounds that motherhood, specifically its image is created from the perspective of the male point of view and contains elements of repressive patriarchy. Thus, motherhood can be seen as a politicized

institution (Alahmari, 2018, p. 129). This approach suggests that the relationship between mothers and daughters cannot be fully determined. The cultural code that is transmitted defines the relationship to a parent, so it is not known what a daughter's relationship to her parent would look like if the previously transmitted norms and rules for functioning in social roles did not exist (Boobani, Karjoo, 2016, p. 94). This shows how the problem of matrophobia is multifaceted. It touches on the very process of becoming a parent, the relationship with mothers, but also involves a worldview aspect. This approach is one of many forms of opposition to the prevailing patriarchy.

Opposition in society arises mainly among people who do not find themselves in the mainstream system or feel disadvantaged by it. Nor is it a matter of ensuring that the values conveyed reach the mainstream, but that the oppressed group is included in the issues on which it persuades (Cava, 2015, p. 11). There are two forms of disagreement: fundamental and justifying disagreement. Fundamental refers primarily to beliefs and the inability to find a consensus that can form the basis of considerations that have been transferred to the mainstream. Justifying disagreement, refers to people who agree with the accepted principles, but find some elements that would require change (Fowler, Stemplowska, 2014, p. 5). Undoubtedly, the demands of radical feminists, can be classified as fundamental disagreement, since they oppose the systemic framework, created according to phallogocentric motives. As feminist activity is primarily political and social in nature, it can be seen in the context of civil disobedience. Civil disobedience refers to forms of opposition that fall within the thought of democratic principles of conduct. This means that the sovereign accepts dissent, the types of which can be seen as legal or citizens are aware of the possible sanctions if their actions go beyond the limits of the law. Thus, civil disobedience is seen as political blackmail. However, such a form of resistance is seen as acquiescence to the prevailing social arrangements, with an indication of certain changes that the protesters are seeking (Celikates, 2016, p. 37). The activities of radical feminists can be fitted into the definition of civil disobedience. Their opposition is ideologically based and forms of resistance focus on strikes, political or didactic activities. In this day and age, the Internet undoubtedly helps with the message. The main goals that women want to achieve are equality and justice in the broadest sense, so the way radical feminism views motherhood is dualistic. On the one hand, it recognises that the role of mother is disproportionately more burdened with responsibilities than, say, that of father. Here, the ideological context of the problem is revealed, the object of which is to attempt to normalise the husband–wife, father–mother relationship, so that each of these roles is given equal rights and tasks. On the other hand, the perception of motherhood as an institution in the hands of politicians and, at the same time, the fear of becoming a mother can be understood as an opposition in itself. Women choose not to have children, which is detrimental to the demographics of the state. As

Rawls points out, civil disobedience is an act of conscience. This means that the acts of disobedience undertaken are dictated by moral values, which are first and foremost to do no harm to society, and to help groups of oppressed people (Celikates, 2016, p. 38). Why women's dissent can be seen as civil disobedience is that in both cases it is about showing opposition to an institutionalised system, in this case, created with only a male perspective in mind.

In order to bring about systemic change, it is significant to introduce a micro-resistance strategy. Micro-resistance can be understood as any action that seeks to force, to undertake change by the authorities in ways that avoid the escalation of conflict, without the use of force or other drastic measures. Nonetheless, such forms of dissent impede the proper functioning of society while pursuing their intended goals. Ideally, strategies of micro-resistance were illustrated by F. Aladejebi looking at the history of the struggle for racial equality rights in Ontario. As the author points out, the main contributors were black female teachers who, through education, made students aware of racial diversity. Thus, greater mobility was created in the labour market and the black population was able to negotiate their conditions not only professionally, but also at the level of higher education (Aladejebi, 2015, p. 18). Other forms of dissent included taking up positions in state institutions, creating educational projects on the history of racial minorities, artistic activity or involvement in community service. Another significant act of activism in schools was the involvement of students in presenting presentations of the history of people of African descent who had contributed something to the state (Aladejebi, 2015, p. 21). Although such actions are classified as forms of resistance, it should be noted that they do not involve the classical understanding of rebellion as an action combining anger and blackmail. The example given shows that by introducing members of the discriminated group into state institutions, taking care of education and social happenings, the minority itself gains the expected rights and reaches a voice in the public debate. As C. Valli and A. Nai another form of resistance could be persuasion. However, the authors point out that two types of persuasion are distinguished. One is communicated central, the other peripheral. The first type involves the systematic repetition of information, while the second is based on simplified methods of inference. Thus, the strategy of resistance through central persuasion is all the more effective when accompanied by in-depth elaboration, analysis of the message and its means (Nai, Valli, 2023, p. 93). Undoubtedly, activities to influence the activities of the authorities, without the use of force and drastic measures, can be classified as some kind of persuasion. Such forms of activity as education, broadening professional predispositions, undertaking social dialogue can be assigned to the central path. However, even the use of blackmail, speeches involving emotional slogans, the use of lies are classified as peripheral pathways. Feminists in particular, through the use of persuasion and, behind this, forms of micro-resistance, contribute to the creation of political agendas, thereby exerting pressure

on governments to respect gender equality rights. A. Gouws and A. Coetzee, using the example of women activists in South Africa, show that initial forms of resistance, followed by involvement in activist movements, allow women to acquire leadership skills, which later translate into the implementation of equality policies already at state level. Non-governmental organisations also play a special role in helping female politicians to find their way in a patriarchalised system of power. The locally based institution National Rural Women's Movement (NRWM) can also be counted among these. The organisation aimed primarily to educate and activate women in rural communities, who had the least access to reliable information and at the same time awareness of their own decision-making power (Coetzee, Gouws, 2019, p. 2).

Although such a wide range of resistance activities can be attributed to many varieties of feminism, I would like to relate them primarily to the image of the mother in the context of radical feminism. The forms of micro-resistance presented here most aptly correspond to the feminist view of motherhood. First of all, it touches on worldview issues. Radical feminists approach motherhood as an institutionalised form of state influence. They do not accept being assigned to specific roles and thus often choose not to have children. The second important issue is involvement in politics. By having women in state positions, the problem of unwillingness to have children is brought into the public discussion. Raising public awareness of inequalities, especially those resulting from the stereotypical positioning of women and men, should lead to changes in the law, but also in the awareness of every citizen. What is above all revolted against is the social compulsion to function within the family. Already as a child, a woman is assigned to the role of mother and wife, which she will have to fulfil in the future. She is not treated as an individual who will fulfil at least her professional roles. Nowadays, the most effective form of micro-resistance on the part of women is first and foremost to educate themselves, but also others, especially in their immediate environment, by raising awareness among those closest to them. Persuasion introduced in this way will allow for changes to be made from the ground up, as legislation introduced will not change the system unless changes are made from the ground up, in the worldview of the citizens themselves.

In summary, motherhood is an intrinsic part of women's nature. However, it should be emphasised here that it cannot be seen as an end in itself or viewed by women through its prism. It should only be a possibility that a woman can opt for, but it should definitely not be put before her personality or her own aspirations. A woman should not be the image of a mother, but first and foremost an individual who has passions and realises herself on many levels. On the basis of this article, it can be concluded that in today's societies, motherhood places women at a social and political disadvantage. Significantly, this does not only apply to mothers, but to any woman who has been marked by society's accepted patterns and conventions. Thus, it can be concluded that also childless people

are marginalised. Radical feminism emerged as a response and a form of opposition to the patriarchal system. It is a set of diverse forms of resistance to direct society to undertake undeniably important changes. Micro-resistance strategies aim to gradually change attitudes because, as the article proves, persuasion, repeated information with sound elaboration can have a significant, far-reaching impact over time.

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