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Extended Mind and Patriarchy: Cognitive Interpretation of the Reproduction of Patriarchal System

Abstract: The aim of the article is to analyze the patriarchal system in the light of the cognitive concept of the extended mind. The extended mind hypothesis fits in the externalist definition of the mind, where environmental and social factors (exostructures) are valued in explaining complex mental and cognitive processes – subjective experience in general. In this scientific interpretation, the reproduction of patriarchy can be reduced to the individual reproduction of a specific type of mentality, more precisely, the androcentrically shaped intentionality of participants in collective life. In other words, male and female mentality – including perceptual and introspective awareness – are gradually dependent on a complex and multi-level mechanism of cultural transmission. A process that in this case should be perceived as a key factor in promoting patriarchal models of femininity/masculinity, which is directly related to the dissemination of phallogocentric thinking, attitudes, behaviors, etc. in society.

Keywords: extended mind, patriarchy, reproduction, male domination

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Introduction

Many years of research on the functioning of the patriarchal system in specific social conditions have shown that the form and content of relationships between women and men (sexual dimorphism) are not based only on biological determinism, but are largely dependent on the cultural contexts in which such incalculable interactions arise and are perpetuated. In other words, socially accepted definitions of masculinity/femininity – especially the perception and experience of conventionally understood gender roles or the assignment of certain functions or expectations to gender – depend both on the place and time of their practice, as well as on the degree to which individuals internalize a body of values, principles or rules applicable in a given society – often taught and socialized system of values that is based on the intergenerational rooting of an androcentric frame of reference among people. We are talking here about the ways of thinking in which most social practices represent the male point of view, and what is important – men and their behavior are treated in society as a norm, determinant or source of norms (Dueli Klein, 1983, p. 89; Devereaux, 1995, pp. 121–141; Bourdieu, 2002, pp. 81–82; Pierzchalski, 2014, pp. 247–250). These are traditional, to some extent historically perpetuated, gender patterns or patterns of masculinity/femininity, thanks to which not only are the patriarchal formulas of the general social order realized, but also individual and collective experiences among women related to broadly understood oppression or processes of exclusion are created. Consequently, the two-sex relationship is conditioned to the same extent by the practices of male domination, which varies in form and content, as well as by the diversity of women's feelings, related to, among others, experiencing exploitation, violence, reification, injustice, etc. Let us add complex psycho-bodily states that are currently directly dependent on, among others, factors such as race, class, ethnic origin, age, education or place of residence (Wittig, 1993, p. 104; Kimmel, 2000, pp. 86–110). In this sense, analyses relating to the status of women and their subjectivity – especially the formation of female identities and emancipatory strategies among and about women – must take into account the study of various discourses of power/knowledge in which the regulation and production of male domination takes place (Butler, 1992, p. 14). We can add, following Raewyn Connell, that the cultural patterns practiced in everyday life and the related process of comprehensive acculturation allow us to look at gender as a binding pattern of social relations – a strictly multidimensional structure. A certain dynamic whole that influences human perception and behavior in many ways shapes the asymmetry of power or the level of social control (Connell, 2009, pp. 10–12). These are social situations and practices in which the model of patriarchal society is also synonymous with male supremacy and gender inequality, when we speak not only about public discrimination or too little political representation of women, but also with their depreciation in

the private sphere – home, family or sexual relations (Kymlicka, 2002, pp. 378–387; Okin, 1989, pp. 128–130).

A similar type of sensitivity and argumentation regarding the realization of interpersonal relationships in a given social environment can be found in the cognitive sciences. This applies to those theoretical positions that emphasize genetic-cultural co-evolution in the context of conducting scientific reflection on human mentality and the complexity of cognitive mechanisms. We are talking here about cognitive research strategies that emphasize the complementarity and importance of analyses from the biological and evolutionary, cultural and social level. This is the moment when individual mentality and diverse perceptual and cognitive processes are treated as a coincidence of neural activity and structural and social factors; when environmental (externalistic) sources are emphasized in the formation of human intentionality (Cacioppo, Berntson, Sheridan, McClintock, 2002, pp. 21–46).

The aim of the article is to analyze the patriarchal system in the light of the cognitive concept of the extended mind. In this scientific interpretation, the reproduction of patriarchy can be reduced to the individual reproduction of a specific type of mentality and/or androcentrically shaped intentionality of participants in collective life. In other words, male and female mentality – including perceptual and introspective awareness – are gradually dependent on a complex and multi-level mechanism of cultural transmission. A process that in this case should be perceived as a key factor (determinant) in promoting patriarchal models of femininity/masculinity, which is directly related to the dissemination of phallogocentric thinking, attitudes, behaviors, etc. in society. Additionally, the mentality shaped in this way can be treated, on the one hand, as a mental mechanism for authenticating gender differences, and on the other hand, it means that the concept of gender can acquire new interpretative frameworks or explanatory strategies. Not only is it the social and discursive construction and representation of differences between the sexes in public space, where language or the process of articulating meanings and their social resonance play a key role, but also it is the socialized individual mentality emerging in a patriarchal environment. The human mind, which, due to its rootedness in the existing objective and social environment, significantly contributes to acceptance and consent for androcentric hierarchy, formulas of male domination and various practices of violence towards women.

It is worth mentioning that the analysis of the patriarchal system using an extended mind hypothesis seems to be a very good basis for finding answers to the following research questions: Shouldn't the sources of the androcentric frame of reference be sought in people's minds, in their mental rooting, which is the premise justifying the reproduction of the patriarchal system? Can cognitive justifications be helpful for feminist epistemology, especially standpoint theory? Can and should the perpetuation of specific socio-political relations – more

precisely, multi-form discrimination or violence against women – also be sought in the intentionality of men and their mental socialization? Is the reproduction of patriarchal culture not only a consequence of the one created and established ideology, an imposed system of cultural values or institutionalization serving to secure the phallogocentric order? Is it possible to look for its sources in people's minds?

Extended mind

First of all, it should be emphasized that the idea of the extended mind fits in the arguments developed within social neuroscience. We are talking here about research strategies in which cultural and social factors (exostructures) are valued in explaining the human brain/mind – including analyses of individual experiences and cognitive systems. In this cognitive orientation, it is noted that the brain is a mental organ, i.e. extremely active neuronal matter. It is capable not only of routine (automatic) tasks or operations, but also has numerous abilities related to intellectual reflexivity, especially self-reorganization, self-motivation, self-regulation and self-repair. At the same time, the role and functions of environmental contexts that co-create the internal mental states – including the way of thinking, actions, and level of emotionality – of people are not underestimated here (Slaby, Choudhury, 2012, p. 34; Bunge, 2010, p. 160).

This means noticing gradual dependencies and/or numerous feedbacks between the external world and internal mental states occurring in people (Zaki, Ochsner, 2011, pp. 14–40). In cognitive science, it emphasizes the role and importance of neuroimaging and neuropsychological research on social cognition, which focuses on understanding the mechanisms of the brain that have the ability to take the perspective of others and/or reason from their mental states (Mitchell, Mason, Macrae, Banaji, 2006, pp. 63–82). At the same time, we can assume, following Leslie Brothers, that social cognition is a certain ability of the human mind consisting in:

Social cognition is the processing of any information which culminates in the accurate perception of the dispositions and intentions of other individuals (Brothers, 2002, p. 367).

It can be added that human perceptual-cognitive activity is not only (and always) the sensory reception and psycho-bodily registration of stimuli (signals) from the environment, but also a certain mental predisposition, which is essentially a coincidence of direct-indirect epistemic mechanisms. As Robert A. Wilson noted, it is a mental activity that is realized thanks to three key abilities: purely internal (internal cognitive arrangement of the brain); enactive bodily

(cerebral and bodily configuration); world involving (cerebral arrangement and environmental configuration) (Wilson, 2004, p. 188). In such circumstances, the concept of an extended mind seems to be an interesting theoretical proposition, the sources of which should be sought in active externalism, i.e. an epistemological position based on the active role and function of the environment in directing cognitive processes. This is an appreciation of the social-structural domain in the causal explanation of epistemic processes involving people that are diverse in form and content. In this sense, the human body, being connected to its environment, creates a coupled system that can be viewed as a cognitive system in itself. We can talk here about a certain cognitive parity principle between the environment and the mind/brain:

If, as we confront some task, a part of the world functions as a process which, were it done in the head, we would have no hesitation in recognizing as part of the cognitive process, then that part of the world is (so we claim) part of the cognitive process. Cognitive processes ain't (all) in the head! (Clark, Chalmers, 2010, p. 29).

It is worth adding that this theoretical and practical element is the claim that some mental states in human minds can, and often do, arise with the significant participation of external factors. On the one hand, this enables the extension of a single mind – especially individual perception and subjective aspects of cognition or feeling – to the environment and, on the other hand, it is a premise justifying the extension of this mind to other minds (the phenomenon of social cognition). This is also the moment when – to use the metaphor of Clark and Chalmers – “the hegemony of skin and skull” is abandoned in favour of factors external to the human epistemic biomachinery. This means that perceptual and cognitive processes – including subjective attitudes, beliefs, behaviours, desires, experiencing emotions, categorization and visual activity – are shaped not only within the neuronal matter of the brain, but are gradually conditioned by the environment (Clark, Chalmers, 2010, pp. 34–37; Rowlands, 2010, p. 59). In other words, the extended mind hypothesis is based on an assumption that the external world is part of the “physical substrate” of perceptual experience (Rupert, 2009, p. 171). Therefore the causal interaction between the organism and the external environment is a necessary condition for certain kinds of perceptual experience (Noë, 2004, pp. 217–222).

As suggested by Richard Menary, the idea of the extended mind allows us to justify human perception as “going beyond” and/or “transcending” first-person cognition in favour of subjective-corporeal *being-in-the-world*. In this understanding, human perception appears as a holistic-temporal space of subject-object transgressions in which individuals (subjective cognitive acts) enter into complex interactions with other people (multiple subjective cognitive acts), and, more importantly, their mutual epistemic activities are always shaped in some subject-structural environment. Such an epistemological dialectic was aptly

characterized by Shaun Gallagher and Dan Zahavi, for whom human cognitive experience is nothing else than relational interdependence at the interface of the embodied brain/body and actions in the real world. This proves that cognition is not only embodied, but also situated in specific structural and social conditions (Gallagher, Zahavi, 2012, p. 147–171; Streeck, Goodwin, LeBaron, 2011, pp. 1–29). To clarify, we are dealing here with the complexity of sensory-perceptual processes, where there are numerous feedbacks at the interface: body mind culture. More importantly, people's cognitive and mental activity is carried out on the basis of previously existing knowledge systems adapted and used by a given community. Those systems, on the one hand, are interpreted by valid background knowledge (commonly available knowledge, knowledge that is synonymous with obviousness or objectivity), and on the other hand, are treated as an element conditioning and structuring complex cognitive mechanisms. In the latter case, we are talking about the formation and functioning of the so-called cognitive patterns based on previous cultural and social practices – schemas that translate into current recognition of the environment – including schematic thinking about the world. Hence, thanks to the everyday use of cognitive schemas by entities, it is possible to, among others: information processing from the environment; visual-intellectual perception and interpretation; understanding and perceiving other people, as well as their own behavior in comparison to other people (Tesser, 1978, p. 293).

The above statements correspond to culturalist positions, which emphasize the fact that diverse human cognition – and more importantly, subjective reflexivity, intellectual categorization, subjective stereotyping and the repetition of prejudices – are rooted in social practices and collective consciousness (Searle, 2002, pp. 93–98). In other words, the individual intellect arises and is defined in cultural ontogeny. As Michael Tomasello noted, human beings developed culture in the process of phylogeny, which in the process of evolution became a key formula for adaptation to the environment – more broadly, the acquisition of cultural patterns. Importantly, cultural transmission, diverse in form and content, led to the development of mechanisms of sociogenesis (Tomasello, 1999, p. 14). Let us add that we can certainly perceive such argumentation as a substantive justification for contemporary feminist reflection, especially for critical analyses of the functioning of patriarchy, its cultural sources and intersubjective reproduction. In the case of broadly understood feminist research, it is about the phenomenon of prior establishment and cultural sanctioning of gender division and roles, where the male/“human” point of view (the imperative of universality; the symbol of the “norm”) as opposed to the female/“other” is explained. As Rosi Braidotti noted:

The symbolic division of labour between the sexes, which the term gender helps to explain, is the system set up by phallogocentrism, which is the inner logic of

patriarchy. In other words, this system is neither necessary, as in historically inevitable, nor is rational, as in conceptually necessary. It simply *has come to be* as powerful foundation of a system in which we are all constructed as either men or women by certain symbolic, semiotic, and material conditions (Braidotti, 2011, p. 143).

Patriarchal system

Considering this cognitive approach, it seems interesting to explain the patriarchal system – more precisely, its reproduction in specific and political conditions – through the prism of the mental roots of *homo sapiens* in a given cultural and social environment. On the one hand, we are talking about a multi-threaded feminist epistemology, dominated by the idea that women have a social location that offers unique insight into the dominant structures and ideologies that govern patriarchy. On the other hand, the role and importance of the feminist standpoint theory is emphasized, where in the face of various traditions (liberal, Marxist, social), the applicable patriarchal system becomes synonymous with, among others, unjust discrimination of women; women's imagination, and their exclusion from public production, universal male control of women's sexual and procreative capacities, or power's form of social alienation (Jaggar, 2004, pp. 55–66; Harding, 1983, pp. 49–82).

As Lunghi (2002, p. 168) points out, mentioning Touraine:

The so-called liberation of women does not merely destroy a hierarchised social order (...) but leads to the discovery of a female culture and the communication between this culture and that of men (...) the freedom of women is a central element in the construction of a multicultural society (...). We see a multiculturalism based on the separation of social categories being replaced by a different multiculturalism, based no longer on distance but on communication (Touraine, 1997, pp. 201–202).

For this reason, the patriarchy reading and the (re)interpretation (and the response to the patriarchy system), must be interdisciplinary and transversal, underlining the current historical-political complexity that sees women as subject-objects of history, of society, of social practices and relations and of politics.

In fact, according to Saraceno (1992), it was crucial to read the women's identity through the history of human beings in dynamics terms, looking not only at the structural data as gender, age, social class, level of education, occupation but also at facts and events about society in a historical and socio-cultural specific "era". This is the "life course approach" that is important to consider in order to complete the discussion about the current patriarchal system as it is also crucial to consider the "intersectional approach" (Crenshaw, 2008). Women identity and their all experiences (especially of discrimination, exclusion, violence,

mistreatment, etc.) should be read in their particularities and individualities, not as a macro social category.³

Indeed, there are so many “forms” of feminism seeking to remove the veil from the patriarchy in a society that is retaining socio-cultural traits that are distinctly linked to the past and which, even today, are being socially re-enacted.⁴ All feminist and transfeminist movements, not only in Italy, as “Non Una di Meno” and “#MeeToo” among others, are involved in the social change especially in the gender-based violence, such as rape, domestic abuse and harassment. All women stories becomes essential to shake consciences and reaffirm the importance of education on sexuality, affectivity and emotions from childhood.⁵ A view to re-educating society between domination (Bourdieu, 1998) and freedom, “protection and care, subjection and seduction” (Bimbi, 2012, p. 52): it is a “gentle” and “invisible violence” (Ibid.) that does not act directly via pragmatic violence but indirectly through cognitive categories that affects the world perceive and consequent actions between dominant and dominant. It's the symbolic violence (Ibid.).

t cannot be otherwise, because patriarchal culture in the history of human development – according to Erich Fromm's argument – has developed its own system of reference and assignment, based on a specific body of values and hierarchy. More importantly, patriarchy – through the use of specific prejudices and stereotypes about women's subservient role – predisposed men to a central position and/or function in social and political practices (Fromm, 1999, pp. 124–137). In other words, the patriarchal system functioning in specific social

³ To be exhaustive, a mention should also be add in this reflection on the queer theory: “a journey to recover the plenitude of senses, to rediscover the common ground that capitalism as a system of relations that has alienated and declared obsolete” (Rich, 2009, p. 114 cited in: L. Ellena, L. Hernández Nova, C. Pagnotta, “Tempi strambi. Il tramonto del femminismo e l'alba queer”, in: *World Wide Women: Globalizzazione, Generi, Linguaggi*, vol. 4, Torino: CIRSDe – Centro Interdisciplinare di Ricerche e Studi delle Donne – Università degli Studi di Torino, 2012, p. 128). On the term “queer” use and his different meanings, see: M. Pustianaz (a cura di), *Queer in Italia. Differenza in movimento*, Pisa: Edizioni ETS, 2011. And also it is important to include the FEMEN movement, the BIMBO and the TRADWIVES that also online find social space and diffusion.

⁴ In Italy, there is a current socio-cultural and political theme about the patriarchy in reference to the Giulia Cecchettin crime case happened on 23 November 2023 (two days before the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women); the 22-year-old woman who disappeared in Veneto with her ex-boyfriend Filippo Turetta and was found dead seven days later, murdered by him. Elena, Giulia's sister, said to the Italians media: *'Monsters' are not insane, they are healthy younger's of Patriarchy'*. A strong accusation that emphasised how ideas, stereotypes and prejudices can be transformed into behaviour and acts and to represent a serious risk for society.

⁵ Various media outlets describe the social reaction as “angry”. See: https://www.ansa.it/veneto/notizie/2023/11/26/pentole-e-coperchi-passeggiata-arrabbiata-nel-paese-di-giulia_9e895fe9-dde0-4fc8-9754-9165b1ca0027.html (accessed: 5.11.2024).

conditions is an institutionalized gender regime where gender relations are established based on promoted discursive practices or socialized emotional relations. It is a structuring cultural and meaning system, within which particular social practices are implemented – including parenting, social, professional, love, etc. Therefore, patriarchy serves specific social interests, and more importantly, it promotes and perpetuates specific gender meanings, i.e. the entire system of interpretation, connotations, subtexts and allusions that have accumulated over the course of our cultural history (Connell, 2009, pp. 134–151).

In this sense, also technology plays its role today in reproducing new forms of discrimination, especially against women: artificial intelligence may encounter a number of biases during its operational process online (Varsha, 2023) that “creates a model used in practice for a real-world task” (FRA – European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2022, p. 18). In particular, there are reproductions of stereotypical images, objectification of women, intersectional biases and the invisibility of specific groups (Crawford, 2016) that can contribute to keep women in the passive role of mothers and housewives. This:

Tendency to present women as passive and objectified reinforces patriarchal norms and contributes to women’s marginalisation, objectification and oppression in society (Pisker et al., 2023, p. 3).

Therefore, this system between real and virtual discrimination, induces people to fixate on a certain stereotypical language that does not remain in the verbal form alone, but which translates into symbolic and violent behaviour against women and other social categories considered “weaker” – not only for individuals but also for communities and the entire society (Bolukbasi et al., 2016) even causing negative effects on policies and social interventions.

In fact, with respect to the Italian political framework, it seems to have a gap between the political interventions and the real woman social consideration (Rosi, 2020): gender is at the centre of many disinformation campaigns, often characterized by hate speech language, because the main narration and communication is about “males as victims of feminism and women blamed for the gradual decline of today’s society” (Di Meco, Apolito, 2023, p. 14).⁶ According to Amnesty’s 2021 report, misogyny (understood as a real attitude of aversion or repulsion towards women) has been an active trend over the years: women are hated online all over the Nation, with a strong concentration in the north-east of Italy.⁷ There were more than 240,000 negative tweets analysed referring to

⁶ See: L. Di Meco, N. Apolito, “Armi di reazione e odio. Disinformazione di Genere, Misoginia e Abusi Online Contro le Donne in Politica in Italia”, *#ShePersisted*, 2023, https://she-persisted.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ShePersisted_Italy.pdf (accessed: 5.11.2024).

⁷ See: Report completo al link: <https://www.amnesty.it/barometro-dellodio-intolleranza-pandemica/> and <http://www.voxdiritti.it/mappa-dellintolleranza-6-misoginia/>. Piattaforma analizzata Twitter. Data, 2021.

working women who are deemed incompetent, useless, incapable. Hate Speech is an intolerant lexicon that takes origins from the anger, through the terms use such as: deserving, loser, frustrated, too emotional and so on... where emotions are synonymous with irrationality and instinct⁸. Therefore, underlying the hate speech phenomenon, are relational and power dynamics linked to stereotypes, together with false representations that are normalised to the point of becoming true discrimination in the culmination of physical violence.

The mirror of this conditions is also reflected in society: according to a recent report on stereotypes conducted by ISTAT (National Institute of Statistics, 2023), in Italy, 48.7% of people still have at least one stereotype about sexual violence. 39.3% of men think that a woman can evade a sexual intercourse if she really does not want it and almost 20% think that violence is caused by the way women dress, and in some cases, physical violence in the couple relationship is still tolerated.⁹ "Oppression is not a game, nor is it solely about language – for many of us, it still remains profoundly real" (Harding, 2004, p. 253) and for all these reasons it is important to re-read the patriarchy in an integrated and dynamic reflection. Only in this critical and global way, we can consider all the specific and particular traditional, contemporary, virtual and real forms of patriarchy.

Extended mind and the reproduction of patriarchy

It is worth adding that patriarchy consists of two related elements, i.e. a specific structure and ideology. The structural aspect of the patriarchal system is a manifestation of the hierarchical organization of various social institutions and interpersonal interactions, where an organizational and ordering pattern is defined, which, by definition, creates a hierarchy of privileges, leadership, benefits, etc. in society. It is the institutionalization of power, i.e. differences in influence, level of management, decision-making, self-realization or the degree of achieving goals, interests between women and men, giving the opportunity to obtain – and more importantly, inherit – the status or position desired in given state circumstances. No less important here is maintaining the masculinist order and the real functioning of the phallogocentric asymmetry of power – as a measurable social benefit – which depend directly on the extent of "consent" in a given society.

⁸ See the Lombrosian idea (i.e. the social stigma of dangerousness) of delinquent women and prostitutes who are naturally devoted to criminal and manipulative actions, deserving of violence. C. Lombroso, *La donna delinquent. La prostituta e la donna normale*, Roma: Editori L. Roux e C., 1893.

⁹ Full report at: https://www.istat.it/it/files//2023/11/STAT_TODAY_Stereotipi.pdf (accessed: 5.11.2024).

Therefore, the second aspect of patriarchy becomes crucial, i.e. the ideological factor serving to strengthen the targeted “consent”. Ideological instruments provide real support for broadly understood violence against women (both physical, material and symbolic), where women are subordinated to men in various forms and contents and create one-sided networks of benefits. It is a rationalization of inequality, where ideology ensures state control of male domination. In this sense, socialization becomes a mechanism that authenticates the “rightness” of the male order, in which any inequalities are natural, even unquestionable. At the same time, it promotes the reproduction of “objectivity” and “no alternatives” in sexual relations (Emerson Dobash, Dobash, 1979, pp. 43–44).

Let us recall that the category of reproduction in feminism is interpreted mainly as a social form of repression towards women, when through cultural mediation – especially the processes of socialization and intergenerational inheritance – women and men reproduce and perpetuate specific family relations or the sphere of sexuality. We are talking here about the reproduction of asymmetry in gender relations, when women are actually subordinated to men on a daily basis. In other words, the concept of reproduction should be explained through the prism of cultural and structural processes, and not only strictly economic ones, when it is a sign of perpetuating or maintaining the status quo. Although we must not forget that economic violence by men against women may also have a cultural basis, and more importantly, it may be a source of other types of violence – mental, physical or sexual. These are situations in which women repeat the attitude of learned helplessness and perform executive functions, or moments when there is social consent to practicing relationships of dependence in the context of delegating care and professional work between the genders. (Pierzchalski, 2019, pp. 187–218).

At the same time, it should be added that attempts to scientifically define the concept of reproduction can be found in the writings of Karl Marx, who – analyzing the dialectic of antagonisms and interdependencies at the interface: capitalist versus wage worker – wrote about the effectiveness of creating an objectified and each time objectifying “capitalist relationship”. From the point of view of the process of reproduction of the patriarchal system, Marx’s theses about the individual and his multilateral, comprehensive and objective involvement in existing social conditions are crucial. In this sense, every human being is primarily a social being. This means that its ontological status – especially its position, role or function in the general social dimension – is an expression and emanation of the entirety of existing social relations. We can say that a single entity is not only a product and/or product of evolution, but also – and perhaps above all – a historical and social product. Let us clarify that all social (supra-individual) issues – including the process of collective reproduction of patriarchy – can, and indeed should, be considered in terms of complex social relations. Real relations

in force at a specific historical moment – and not only through the prism of given individuals, their subjective motivations, goals or needs:

In the investigation of political conditions one is too easily tempted to overlook the objective nature of the relationships and to explain everything from the *will* of the persons acting. There are relationships, however, which *determine* the actions of private persons as well as those of individual authorities, and *which are as in dependent as are the movements of breathing* (Marx, 1997, p. 144).

In such circumstances, a real person – their psychophysical structure, particular consciousness, achieved socio-economic status, position and role they play in relation to others – can be interpreted as a functional subject or object (if subject to reification and alienation) in relation to the totality of social relations. It means a subjective-objective dialectic, where, on the one hand, individuals have causative power, influence or gradational influence on the environment, and on the other hand, their subjective activity and multi-faceted action is determined by the external structural and social environment. This is a key thesis and argumentation thanks to which the philosopher from Trier was able to prove not only the existence of class antagonisms in capitalist society, but also explain the sources of effective imposition, supervision or control by the rulers (capitalists) on the ruled (proletariat). An analogy can be made here to sexual dimorphism and the reproduction of the patriarchal system, including the division of roles and functions between women and men – subjective-objective dialectic, where women's individual agency, their everyday existence or psychocorporeal experience of being-in-the-world confront and/or become interdependent on conditions and factors external to them. These are social situations, states of affairs or processes in which we are dealing with gradual co-determination¹⁰ of individual female attitudes, desires, expectations and goals with the applicable and culturally sanctioned patriarchal system.

It is worth noting that patriarchy – treated as a comprehensive system ordering and organizing not only human cognition, but also everyday existence, including private, family and professional life – creates not only moral attitudes, but also favors patriarchally conditioned intentionality.

In the first case, these are social situations in which practicing a commonly accepted gender role helps to build one's self-esteem or can be a source of self-confirmation of the correctness of one's beliefs or actions. At the same time, it may be a reason to consider one's own behavior as correct or indicative of a valuable life (Williams, 2012, pp. 48–54). In turn, in the second case, we are talking

¹⁰ In social practices, there may be both gradual convergence in this subjective-objective dialectic, which is synonymous with sexual dimorphism in given social conditions. The state of convergence means a certain compliance of women's expectations, ideas, dreams, aspirations or goals with the functioning canon of the principles of the patriarchal system. Divergence is opposite.

about subjective states of mind – both fully conscious and conscious or unconscious ones – when individual desires, intentions or perceptions are shaped on the basis of the internalized body of patriarchal values, especially those relating to traditional patterns of masculinity/femininity, functioning within a given society. In this sense, the outside world is a point of reference in shaping subjective intentionality, and more importantly, it becomes a leading premise for the dynamic process of intersubjective sharing of consciousness. As John R. Searle rightly suggests, in every cultural and social practice we are dealing with a mechanism for realizing collective intentions. These are specific social states that mean, among others, the possibility of existence in the community of various formulas of co-understanding, co-feeling, co-categorization, etc.; the possibility of functioning of certain contexts of sensing Others; possibility of occurrence of communal awareness, where these types of awareness coalesce into a sense of us (Searle, 2002, pp. 96–105). At this point, we can outline a certain multi-stage relationship between individual mentality and the socially reproduced patriarchal system:

1. Subjective mental states are conditioned and correlated with the human body and the environment in which a person grows and lives in a multi-causal and multi-functional way.
2. Each mind operates in a relational space, where it co-creates the experienced and knowable reality with other minds. In this understanding, women and men do not exist in a social vacuum, and their knowledge and experiences are shaped and developed, among others, based on mutual imitation, teaching or observation.
3. Such formalized and informal rules of reciprocity (the prevailing culture of co-participation or competition in a given society) are a key element and/or structural core of the reproduction of the patriarchal system, and also mean practical “transcendences” of subjective mentality in favor of co-existence and co-experience of the world, which, in historical reflection, is in most cases “shaped” on a patriarchal prototype.

In the case of patriarchy, this means that the patriarchal system should be read as a binding world-environment in which material and immaterial products of cultural practices – especially applicable norms, values, principles, meanings, aesthetics, etc. – influence, shape, and, most importantly, they organize the human mind, especially the perception of women and men in society.

For example, from the perspective of Marxist feminism, the sphere of sexuality and the organization of the capitalist production system are mutually determining and interdependent. In this approach, capitalist ways of producing material life determine not only all social processes, political practices and human existence, but more importantly, support the prevailing class ideology, especially those ideological projects that are based on the oppression and exploitation of women (Tong, 1995, p. 40 et al.; Humm, 1993, pp. 200–201). In other words,

capitalism as a practice is essentially a male practice in which women are basically exploited, including, among other things, giving meaning and defining the sense of the phenomenon of women fulfilling household duties unpaid and promoting the submissiveness and passivity of women in family or professional life. Therefore, the reproduction of the patriarchal system means a variety of social processes and practices in which the social order, based on the division of roles, responsibilities and privileges between men and women, is daily recreated and reproduced. In other words, the everyday life of women and men is inextricably linked to their existential participation and rootedness in the ordered structure of gender roles (Razavi, 2013, pp. 289–312). It is the structure that not only comprehensively and on many levels of social reality frames or tries to “standardize” and/or unify the reactions, ways of thinking, activities, etc. of women and men (practical institutionalization of patriarchal ideas of masculinity and femininity), but also shapes their mentality in terms of programming and cultural acceptance of gender asymmetry. We are talking here about the discursively promoted “gender normality”, where there is subordination and domination of men, differentiated in form and content, while “taming” women’s aspirations and motivations related to attempts to escape or negate the traditional roles of mother, wife or employee.

Conclusions

To sum up, it can be said that the extended mind hypothesis not only becomes a useful concept thanks to which we are able to better explain the cognitive idea of the social brain or the emergence of collective intentionality in society, but also can be helpful in feminist criticism of the patriarchal system. In this sense, the externalist strategy in research on the human mind allows for the appreciation of environmental and cultural-social factors, which should be interpreted as an equal element explaining all manifestations of human cognition and experience. At the same time, referring to cultural ontogenesis as a source of direct-indirect formulas of individual and collective cognition, i.e. perceptive and introspective awareness, seems to be an important argument thanks to which we are able to better understand a certain “no alternative” or the universal validity of patriarchy in contemporary societies. In fact, it is a clear demonstration of an observable pattern about sexual dimorphism, when the rooting of our mentality – including ways of thinking and acting – more precisely, its multiform “dissolution” in the structures of the patriarchal division of roles and functions between women and men, becomes so strong that it is to some extent unreflective, imperceptible or “natural”. In this sense, patriarchy – treated as an omnipotent social system – gains its vitality or autodynamism thanks to the mental replication of traditional models of femininity and masculinity. As we have tried to

summarise, patriarchy takes multiple and now increasingly insidious forms reproducing images, ideas, thoughts, actions that have a past rooted in every social and political sphere. It would be useful to focus on concrete awareness-raising and prevention interventions through educational, training and socio-cultural programmes that must speak to the younger generations, providing them critical, new, inclusive cognitive and emotional tools in order to respect others. It is crucial, especially today, a focus on all forms of discrimination and hate that undermine the foundations of a state's social bond and civilisation.

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