

Feminist Politics in the Age of Recognition: A Two-Dimensional Approach to Gender Justice

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ABSTRACT *In the course of the last thirty years, feminist theories of gender have shifted from quasi-Marxist, labor-centered conceptions to putatively “post-Marxist” culture- and identity-based conceptions. Reflecting a broader political move from redistribution to recognition, this shift has been double-edged. On the one hand, it has broadened feminist politics to encompass legitimate issues of representation, identity, and difference. Yet, in the context of an ascendant neoliberalism, feminist struggles for recognition may be serving to less to enrich struggles for redistribution than to displace the latter. I aim to resist that trend. In this essay, I propose an analysis of gender that is broad enough to house the full range of feminist concerns, those central to the old socialist-feminism as well as those rooted in the cultural turn. I also propose a correspondingly broad conception of justice, capable of encompassing both distribution and recognition, and a non-identitarian account of recognition, capable of synergizing with redistribution. I conclude by examining some practical problems that arise when we try to envision institutional reforms that could redress gender maldistribution and gender misrecognition simultaneously.*

Feminist theory tends to follow the Zeitgeist. In the 1970s, when second-wave feminism emerged out of the New Left, its most influential theories of gender reflected the still-potent influence of Marxism. Whether sympathetic or antagonistic to class analysis, these theories located gender relations on the terrain of political economy, even as they also sought to expand that terrain to encompass housework, reproduction, and sexuality. Soon thereafter, chafing under the limits of labour-centred paradigms, additional currents of feminist theorizing emerged in dialogue with psychoanalysis. In the Anglophone world, object-relations theorists began to conceptualize gender as an “identity.” On the European continent, meanwhile, Lacanians rejected the term “gender relations” as too sociological and replaced it with “sexual difference,” which they conceptualized in relation to subjectivity and the symbolic order. In neither case was the initial intention to supplant Marxism *per se*; rather, both currents saw themselves as enriching and deepening materialist paradigms that too often lapsed into vulgar economism. By the 1990s, however, the New Left was only a memory, and Marxism seemed to many a dead letter. In that context, lines of thought that had begun by presuming Marxism’s relevance took

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on another valence. Joining the larger exodus of intellectuals from Marxism, most feminist theorists took “the cultural turn.” With the exception of a few holdouts, even those who rejected psychoanalysis came to understand gender as an identity or a “cultural construction.” Today, accordingly, gender theory is largely a branch of cultural studies. As such, it has further attenuated, if not wholly lost, its historic links to Marxism and to social theory and political economy more generally.

As always, the vicissitudes of theory follow those of politics. The shift, over the last thirty years, from quasi-Marxist, labour-centred understandings of gender to culture- and identity-based conceptions coincides with a parallel shift in feminist politics. Whereas the sixty-eight generation hoped, among other things, to restructure the political economy so as to abolish the gender division of labour, subsequent feminists formulated other, less material aims. Some, for example, sought recognition of sexual difference, while others preferred to deconstruct the categorial opposition between masculine and feminine. The result was a shift in the center of gravity of feminist politics. Once centred on labour and violence, gender struggles have focused increasingly on identity and representation in recent years. The effect has been the subordination of social struggles to cultural struggles, the politics of redistribution to the politics of recognition – this was not, once again, the original intention. Cultural feminists and deconstructionists alike assumed that feminist cultural politics would synergize with struggles for social equality. But that assumption, too, has fallen prey to the larger Zeitgeist. In “the network society,” the feminist turn to recognition has dovetailed all too neatly with a hegemonic neoliberalism that wants nothing more than to repress socialist memory.

Feminism is hardly alone in this trajectory. On the contrary, the recent history of gender theory reflects a wider shift in the grammar of political claims-making. On the one hand, struggles for recognition have exploded everywhere—witness battles over multiculturalism, human rights, and national autonomy. On the other hand, struggles for egalitarian redistribution are in relative decline—witness the weakening of trade unions and the co-optation of labour and socialist parties in “the third way.” The result is a tragic historical irony; the shift from redistribution to recognition has occurred just as an aggressively globalizing U.S.-led capitalism is exacerbating economic inequality.²

For feminism, accordingly, this shift has been double-edged. On the one hand, the turn to recognition represents a broadening of gender struggle and a new understanding of gender justice. No longer restricted to questions of distribution, gender justice now encompasses issues of representation, identity, and difference. The result is a major advance over reductive economic paradigms that had difficulty conceptualizing harms rooted, not in the division of labour, but in androcentric patterns of cultural value. On the other hand, it is no longer clear that feminist struggles for recognition are serving to deepen and enrich struggles for egalitarian redistribution. Rather, in the context of an ascendant neoliberalism, they may be serving to displace the latter. In that case, the recent gains in gender theory would be entwined with a tragic loss. Instead of arriving at a

²For a fuller discussion, see Nancy Fraser (1995). “From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a ‘Postsocialist’ Age,” *New Left Review* 212 pp. 68 - 93; reprinted in Fraser, (1997) *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the “Postsocialist” Condition*. New York: Routledge. See also Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics: Redistribution, Recognition, and Participation,” in Nancy Fraser and Axel Honneth, *Redistribution or Recognition? A Political-Philosophical Exchange*. (London: Verso and Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2003).

broader, richer paradigm that could encompass both redistribution and recognition, we would have traded one truncated paradigm for another—a truncated economism for a truncated culturalism. The result would be a classic case of combined and uneven development; the remarkable recent feminist gains on the axis of recognition would coincide with stalled progress if not outright losses on the axis of distribution.

That is my reading of present trends. In what follows, I shall outline an approach to gender theory and feminist politics that responds to this diagnosis and aims to forestall its full realization. What I have to say divides into four parts. First, I shall propose an analysis of gender that is broad enough to house the full range of feminist concerns, those central to the old socialist-feminism as well as those rooted in the cultural turn. To complement this analysis, I shall propose, second, a correspondingly broad conception of justice, capable of encompassing both distribution and recognition, and third, a non-identitarian account of recognition, capable of synergizing with redistribution. Fourth and finally, I shall examine some practical problems that arise when we try to envision institutional reforms that could redress maldistribution and misrecognition simultaneously. In all four sections, I shall break with those feminist approaches that focus exclusively on gender. Rather, I shall situate gender struggles as one strand among others in a broader political project aimed at institutionalizing democratic justice across multiple axes of social differentiation.

Revisiting Gender Theory: A Two-Dimensional Analysis

To avoid truncating the feminist problematic, and unwittingly colluding with neoliberalism, feminists today need to revisit the concept of gender. What is needed is a broad and capacious conception, which can accommodate at least two sets of concerns. On the one hand, such a conception must incorporate the labour-centred problematic associated with socialist-feminism; on the other hand, it must also make room for the culture-centred problematic associated with putatively “postmarxian” strands of feminist theorizing. Rejecting sectarian formulations that cast those two problematics as mutually antithetical, feminists need to develop an account of gender that encompasses the concerns of both. As we shall see, this requires theorizing both the gendered character of the political economy and the androcentrism of the cultural order, without reducing either one of them to the other. At the same time, it also requires theorizing two analytically distinct dimensions of sexism, one centred on distribution, the other centred on recognition. The result will be a *two-dimensional conception of gender*. Only such a conception can support a viable feminist politics in the present era.

Let me explain. The approach I propose requires viewing gender bifocally, simultaneously through two different lenses. Viewed through one lens, gender has affinities with class; viewed through the other, it is more akin to status. Each lens brings into focus an important aspect of women’s subordination, but neither alone is sufficient. A full understanding becomes available only when the two lenses are superimposed. At that point, gender appears as a categorial axis that spans two dimensions of social ordering, the dimension of *distribution* and the dimension of *recognition*.

From the distributive perspective, gender appears as a class-like differentiation, rooted in the economic structure of society. A basic organizing principle of the division

of labour, it underlies the fundamental division between paid "productive" labour and unpaid "reproductive" and domestic labour, assigning women primary responsibility for the latter. Gender also structures the division within paid labour between higher-paid, male-dominated, manufacturing and professional occupations and lower-paid, female-dominated "pink collar" and domestic service occupations. The result is an economic structure that generates gender-specific forms of distributive injustice.

From the recognition perspective, in contrast, gender appears as a status differentiation, rooted in the status order of society. Gender codes pervasive cultural patterns of interpretation and evaluation, which are central to the status order as a whole. Thus, a major feature of gender injustice is androcentrism: an institutionalized pattern of cultural value that privileges traits associated with masculinity, while devaluing everything coded as "feminine," paradigmatically—but not only—women. Pervasively institutionalized, androcentric value patterns structure broad swaths of social interaction. Expressly codified in many areas of law (including family law and criminal law), they inform legal constructions of privacy, autonomy, self-defense, and equality. They are also entrenched in many areas of government policy (including reproductive, immigration, and asylum policy) and in standard professional practices (including medicine and psychotherapy). Androcentric value patterns also pervade popular culture and everyday interaction. As a result, women suffer gender-specific forms of *status subordination*, including sexual harassment, sexual assault, and domestic violence; trivializing, objectifying, and demeaning stereotypical depictions in the media; disparagement in everyday life; exclusion or marginalization in public spheres and deliberative bodies; and denial of the full rights and equal protections of citizenship. These harms are injustices of misrecognition. They are relatively independent of political economy and are not merely "superstructural." Thus, they cannot be overcome by redistribution alone but require additional, independent remedies of recognition.

When the two perspectives are combined, gender emerges as a two-dimensional category. It contains both a political-economic face that brings it within the ambit of redistribution and also a cultural-discursive face that brings it simultaneously within the ambit of recognition. Moreover, neither dimension is merely an indirect effect of the other. To be sure, the distributive and recognition dimensions interact with one another. But gender maldistribution is not simply a by-product of status hierarchy; nor is gender misrecognition wholly a by-product of economic structure. Rather, each dimension has some relative independence from the other. Neither can be redressed entirely indirectly, therefore, through remedies addressed exclusively to the other. It is an open question whether the two dimensions are of equal weight. But redressing gender injustice, in any case, requires changing both the economic structure and the status order of contemporary society. Neither, alone, will suffice.

The two-dimensional character of gender wreaks havoc on the idea of an either/or choice between the politics of redistribution and the politics of recognition. That construction assumes that women are either a class or a status group, but not both; that the injustice they suffer is either maldistribution or misrecognition, but not both; that the remedy is either redistribution or recognition, but not both. Gender, we can now see, explodes this whole series of false antitheses. Here we have a category that is a compound of both status and class. Not only is gender "difference" constructed simultaneously from both economic differentials and institutionalized patterns of cultural

value, but both maldistribution and misrecognition are fundamental to sexism. The implication for feminist politics is clear. To combat the subordination of women requires an approach that combines a politics of redistribution with a politics of recognition.³

Rethinking Gender Parity: A Two-Dimensional Conception of Justice

To develop such an approach requires a conception of justice as broad and capacious as the preceding view of gender. Such a conception must also accommodate at least two sets of concerns. On the one hand, it must encompass the traditional concerns of theories of distributive justice, especially poverty, exploitation, inequality, and class differentials. At the same time, it must also encompass concerns recently highlighted in philosophies of recognition, especially disrespect, cultural imperialism, and status hierarchy. Rejecting sectarian formulations that cast distribution and recognition as mutually incompatible understandings of justice, such a conception must accommodate both. As we shall see, this means theorizing maldistribution and misrecognition by reference to a common normative standard, without reducing either one to the other. The result, once again, will be a *two-dimensional conception of justice*. Only such a conception can comprehend the full magnitude of sexist injustice.

The conception of justice I propose centres on the principle of *parity of participation*. According to this principle, justice requires social arrangements that permit all (adult) members of society to interact with one another *as peers*. For participatory parity to be possible, at least two conditions must be satisfied. First, the distribution of material resources must be such as to ensure participants' independence and "voice." This "objective" condition precludes forms and levels of economic dependence and inequality that impede parity of participation. Precluded, therefore, are social arrangements that institutionalize deprivation, exploitation, and gross disparities in wealth, income, and leisure time, thereby denying some people the means and opportunities to interact with others as peers. In contrast, the second condition for participatory parity is "intersubjective." It requires that institutionalized patterns of cultural value express equal respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving social esteem. This condition precludes institutionalized value patterns that systematically depreciate some categories of people and the qualities associated with them. Precluded, therefore, are institutionalized value patterns that deny some people the status of full partners in interaction—whether by burdening them with excessive ascribed "difference" or by failing to acknowledge their distinctiveness.

Both conditions are necessary for participatory parity. Neither, alone, is sufficient. The first brings into focus concerns traditionally associated with the theory of distributive

³Gender, moreover, is not unusual in this regard. "Race," too, is a two-dimensional category, a compound of status and class. Class, also, may well best be understood two-dimensionally, contra orthodox economic theories. And even sexuality, which looks at first sight like the paradigm case of pure recognition, has an undeniable economic dimension. Thus, it may well turn out that virtually all real-world axes of injustice are two-dimensional. Virtually all perpetrate both maldistribution and misrecognition in forms where neither of those injustices can be redressed entirely indirectly but where each requires some practical attention. As a practical matter, therefore, overcoming injustice in virtually every case requires both redistribution and recognition. For a fuller discussion, see Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics," *op. cit.*

justice, especially concerns pertaining to the economic structure of society and to economically defined class differentials. The second brings into focus concerns recently highlighted in the philosophy of recognition, especially concerns pertaining to the status order of society and to culturally defined hierarchies of status. Yet neither condition is merely an epiphenomenal effect of the other. Rather, each has some relative independence. Thus, neither can be achieved wholly indirectly via reforms addressed exclusively to the other. The result is a two-dimensional conception of justice that encompasses *both* redistribution and recognition, without reducing either one to the other.⁴

This approach suits the conception of gender proposed earlier. By construing redistribution and recognition as two mutually irreducible dimensions of justice, it broadens the usual understanding of justice to encompass both the class and status aspects of gender subordination. By submitting both dimensions to the overarching norm of participatory parity, moreover, it supplies a single normative standard for assessing the justice of the gender order. Insofar as the economic structure of society denies women the resources they need for full participation in social life, it institutionalizes sexist maldistribution. Insofar, likewise, as the status order of society constitutes women as less-than-full partners in interaction, it institutionalizes sexist misrecognition. In either case, the result is a morally indefensible gender order.

Thus, the norm of participatory parity serves to identify, and condemn, gender injustice along two dimensions. But the standard also applies to other axes of social differentiation, including class, “race,” sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, and religion. Insofar as social arrangements impede parity of participation along any of these axes, whether via maldistribution or misrecognition, they violate the requirements of justice. The result, as we shall see shortly, is a normative standard that is capable of adjudicating some of the hardest political dilemmas feminists face today. These dilemmas arise at the intersection of multiple axes of subordination, when, for example, efforts to remedy the unjust treatment of a religious minority seem to conflict head-on with efforts to remedy sexism. In the following section of the present essay, I shall show how the principle of participatory parity serves to resolve such dilemmas.

First, however, let me clarify my use of the term “parity,” as it differs from recent French uses of that term. Four points of divergence are especially worth noting. First, in France *parité* designates a law mandating that women occupy half of all slots on electoral lists in campaigns for seats in legislative assemblies. There, accordingly, it means strict numerical equality in gender representation in electoral contests. For me, in contrast, parity is not a matter of numbers. Rather, it is a qualitative condition, the condition of being a *peer*, of being on a *par* with others, of interacting with them on an equal footing. That condition is not guaranteed by mere numbers, as we know from former Communist countries, some of which came close to achieving parity in the French sense while remaining very far from achieving it in mine. To be sure, the severe under-representation of women in legislative assemblies and other formal political institutions usually signifies qualitative disparities of participation in social life. But numerical quotas are not necessarily, or always, the best solution. Thus, my conception deliberately leaves open

⁴For a fuller argument, see Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics,” *op. cit.*
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(for democratic deliberation) the question of exactly what degree of representation or level of equality is necessary to ensure participatory parity.

The reason has to do with the second difference between my view of parity and the French one, a difference concerning scope. In France, the requirement of *parité* concerns one dimension of justice only, namely, the dimension of recognition. There, accordingly, it is apparently assumed that the chief obstacle to women's full participation in political life is an androcentric value hierarchy in the party structure and that the principal remedy is the constitutional requirement that women occupy half the slots on electoral lists. For me, in contrast, the requirement of participatory parity applies to both dimensions of social justice, hence to distribution as well as recognition. And I assume that the obstacle to parity can be (and often is) maldistribution as well as misrecognition. In the case of gender disparity in political representation, then, I assume that what is required is not only the deinstitutionalization of androcentric value hierarchies, but also the restructuring of the division of labour to eliminate women's "double shift," which constitutes a formidable distributive obstacle to their full participation in political life.

The third key difference is also a matter of scope, but in a different sense. In France, *parité* applies to one arena of interaction only: electoral campaigns for seats in legislative assemblies. For me, in contrast, parity applies throughout the whole of social life. Thus, justice requires parity of participation in a multiplicity of interaction arenas, including labour markets, sexual relations, family life, public spheres, and voluntary associations in civil society. In each arena, however, participation means something different. For example, participation in the labour market means something qualitatively different from participation in sexual relations or in civil society. In each arena, therefore, the meaning of parity must be tailored to the kind of participation at issue. No single formula, quantitative or otherwise, can suffice for every case. What, precisely, is, required to achieve participatory parity depends, in part, on the nature of the social interaction in question.

The fourth key difference concerns scope in yet another sense. In France, *parité* applies to one axis of social differentiation only, namely, the axis of gender. Thus, the law does not mandate proportional representation of other categories of subordinated people, such as racial/ethnic or religious minorities. Nor, apparently, are its supporters concerned about its impact on such representation. For me, in contrast, justice requires participatory parity across all major axes of social differentiation; not only gender, but, also, "race," ethnicity, sexuality, religion, and nationality.⁵ As I shall explain in the following section, this entails that proposed reforms be evaluated from multiple perspectives, and hence that proponents must consider whether measures aimed at redressing one sort of disparity are likely to end up exacerbating another.⁶

⁵Thus, I reject the essentialist accounts of sexual difference, invoked by some French feminist philosophers to justify *parité*.

⁶There is also a fifth difference, which concerns modality. The French law mandates *parité* of actual participation. For me, in contrast, the moral requirement is that members of society be ensured the *possibility* of parity, if and when they choose to participate in a given activity or interaction. There is no requirement that everyone actually participate in any such activity. To take an example from the United States: separatist groups such as the Amish are perfectly entitled to withdraw from participation in the larger society. What they cannot do, however, is deprive their children of the chance to acquire the social competences they would need to participate as peers in case they should later choose to exit the Amish community and join the social mainstream.

In general, then, my notion of justice as participatory parity is far broader than the French *parité*. Unlike the latter, it provides a normative standard for assessing the justice of *all* social arrangements along *two* dimensions and across *multiple* axes of social differentiation. As such, it represents a fitting counterpart to a conception of gender that encompasses not only the status-oriented dimension of recognition, but, also, the class-like dimension of distribution.

Rethinking Recognition: A Non-Identitarian Feminist Politics

Now, let's consider the implications of these conceptions for feminist politics, beginning first with the politics of recognition. Usually, this is viewed as identity politics. From the standard perspective, what requires recognition is feminine gender identity. Misrecognition consists in the depreciation of such identity by a patriarchal culture and the consequent damage to women's sense of self. Redressing this harm requires engaging in a feminist politics of recognition. Such a politics aims to repair internal self-dislocation by contesting demeaning androcentric pictures of femininity. Women must reject such pictures in favour of new self-representations of their own making. Having refashioned their collective identity, moreover, they must display it publicly in order to gain the respect and esteem of the society-at-large. The result, when successful, is "recognition," a positive relation to oneself. On the identity model, then, a feminist politics of recognition means identity politics.

Without doubt, this identity model contains some genuine insights concerning the psychological effects of sexism. Yet, as I have argued elsewhere, it is deficient on at least two major counts. First, it tends to reify femininity and to obscure cross-cutting axes of subordination. As a result, it often recycles dominant gender stereotypes, while promoting separatism and political correctness. Second, the identity model treats sexist misrecognition as a free-standing cultural harm. As a result, it obscures the latter's links to sexist maldistribution, thereby impeding efforts to combat both aspects of sexism simultaneously.⁷ For these reasons, feminists need an alternative approach.

The concepts of gender and justice proposed here imply an alternative feminist politics of recognition. From this perspective, recognition is a question of *social status*. What requires recognition is not feminine identity but the status of women as full partners in social interaction. Misrecognition, accordingly, does not mean the depreciation and deformation of femininity. Rather, it means social subordination in the sense of being prevented from participating as a peer in social life. To redress the injustice requires a feminist politics of recognition, to be sure, but this does not mean identity politics. On the status model, rather, it means a politics aimed at overcoming subordination by establishing women as full members of society, capable of participating on a par with men.

Let me explain. The status approach requires examining institutionalized patterns of cultural value for their effects on the relative *standing* of women. If and when such patterns constitute women as *peers*, capable of participating on par with men in social

⁷For a fuller critique of the identity model, see Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking Recognition: Overcoming Displacement and Reification in Cultural Politics," *New Left Review* 3 (May/June 2000): 107-120.

life, then we can speak of *reciprocal recognition* and *status equality*. When, in contrast, institutionalized patterns of cultural value constitute women as inferior, excluded, wholly other, or simply invisible--hence as less than full partners in social interaction--then we must speak of *sexist misrecognition* and *status subordination*. On the status model, therefore, sexist misrecognition is a social relation of subordination relayed through *institutionalized patterns of cultural value*. It occurs when social institutions regulate interaction according to androcentric, parity-impeding norms. Examples include criminal laws that ignore marital rape, social-welfare programs that stigmatize single mothers as sexually irresponsible scroungers, and asylum policies that regard genital mutilation as a "cultural practice" like any other. In each of these cases, interaction is regulated by an androcentric pattern of cultural value. In each case, the result is to deny women the status of full partners in interaction, capable of participating on par with men.

Viewed in terms of status, therefore, misrecognition constitutes a serious violation of justice. Wherever and however it occurs, a claim for recognition is in order. But note precisely what this means. Aimed not at valorizing femininity, but rather at overcoming subordination, claims for recognition seek to establish women as full partners in social life, able to interact with male peers. They aim, that is, *to deinstitutionalize androcentric patterns of value that impede gender parity and to replace them with patterns that foster it*.⁸

In general, then, the status model makes possible a *non-identitarian* politics of recognition. Such a politics applies to gender, to be sure. But it also applies to other axes of subordination, including "race," sexuality, ethnicity, nationality and religion. As a result, it enables feminists to adjudicate cases in which claims for recognition posed along one axis of subordination run up against claims posed along another.

Of special interest to feminists are cases in which claims for the recognition of minority cultural practices seem to conflict with gender justice. In such cases, the principle of participatory parity must be applied twice. It must be applied, first, at the *intergroup* level, to assess the effects of institutionalized patterns of cultural value on the relative standing of minorities vis-à-vis majorities. Then, it must be applied, second, at the *intragroup* level, to assess the internal effects of the minority practices for which recognition is being claimed. Taken together, these two levels constitute a double requirement. Claimants must show, first, that the institutionalization of majority cultural norms denies them participatory parity and, second, that the practices whose recognition they seek do not themselves deny participatory parity to others, as well as to some of their own members.

Consider the French controversy over the *foulard*. Here, the issue is whether policies forbidding Muslim girls to wear headscarves in state schools constitute unjust treatment of a religious minority. In this case, those claiming recognition of the *foulard* must establish two points: they must show, first, that the ban on the scarf constitutes an unjust majority communitarianism, which denies educational parity to Muslim girls; and second, that an alternative policy permitting the *foulard* would not exacerbate female subordination—in Muslim communities or in society-at-large. The first point, concerning French majority communitarianism, can be established without difficulty, it seems, as no analogous prohibition bars the wearing of Christian crosses in state schools; thus, the

⁸For a fuller account of the status model, see Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics," op. cit. *Studies in Social Justice*, Volume 1, Number 1, Winter 2007
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current policy denies equal standing to Muslim citizens. The second point, concerning the non-exacerbation of female subordination, has proved controversial, in contrast, as some republicans have argued that the *foulard* is a marker of women's subordination and must therefore be denied state recognition. Disputing this interpretation, however, some multiculturalists have rejoined that the scarf's meaning is highly contested in French Muslim communities today, as are gender relations more generally. Thus, instead of construing it as univocally patriarchal, which effectively accords male supremacists sole authority to interpret Islam, the state should treat the *foulard* as a symbol of Muslim identity in transition; one whose meaning is contested, as is French identity itself, as a result of transcultural interactions in a multicultural society. From this perspective, permitting the *foulard* in state schools could be a step toward, not away, from gender parity.

In my view, the multiculturalists have the stronger argument here. (This is *not* the case, incidentally, for those seeking recognition for what they call "female circumcision"—genital mutilation clearly denies parity in sexual pleasure and in health to women and girls.) But that is not the point I wish to stress here. The point, rather, is that the multiculturalists' argument is rightly cast in terms of parity of participation. This is precisely where the controversy should be joined. Participatory parity is the proper standard for warranting claims for recognition (and redistribution). It enables a non-identitarian feminist politics that can adjudicate conflicts between claims centred on gender and those focused on other, cross-cutting axes of subordination.⁹

Integrating Redistribution and Recognition in Feminist Politics

Now, let's consider the broader implications for feminist politics. As we saw, a feminist politics for today must be two-dimensional, combining a politics of recognition with a politics of redistribution. Only such a politics can avoid truncating the feminist agenda and colluding with neoliberalism. Yet devising such a feminist politics is no easy matter. It is not sufficient to proceed additively, as if one could simply add a politics of redistribution to a politics of recognition. Proceeding in that manner would be to treat the two dimensions as if they occupied two separate spheres. In fact, however, distribution and recognition are thoroughly imbricated with one another. Claims for redistribution and claims for recognition cannot be insulated from each other. On the contrary, they impinge on one another in ways that can give rise to unintended—and unwanted—effects.

Consider, first, that feminist claims for redistribution impinge on recognition. Redistributive policies aimed at mitigating women's poverty, for example, have status implications which can harm the intended beneficiaries. For example, public assistance

⁹This standard cannot be applied monologically, however, in the manner of a decision procedure. It must be applied dialogically, rather, through democratic processes of public debate. In such debates, participants argue about whether existing institutionalized patterns of cultural value impede parity of participation and about whether proposed alternatives would foster it. Thus, participatory parity serves as an idiom of public contestation and deliberation about questions of justice. More strongly, it represents *the principal idiom of public reason*, the preferred language for conducting democratic political argumentation on issues of both distribution and recognition. This issue is discussed in Fraser, "Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics," *op. cit.*

programs aimed specifically at “female-headed families” often insinuate the lesser value of “childrearing” vis-à-vis “wage-earning” and of “welfare mothers” vis-à-vis “tax payers.”¹⁰ At their worst, they mark single mothers as sexually irresponsible scroungers, thereby adding the insult of misrecognition to the injury of deprivation. In general, redistributive policies affect women’s status and identities, as well as their economic position. These effects must be thematized and scrutinized, lest one end up fuelling sexist misrecognition in the course of trying to remedy sexist maldistribution. Redistributive policies have sexist misrecognition effects when a culturally pervasive androcentric devaluation of caregiving inflects support for single-mother families as “getting something for nothing.”¹¹ In this context, feminist struggles for redistribution cannot succeed unless they are joined with struggles for cultural change aimed at revaluing caregiving and the feminine associations that code it. In short, *no redistribution without recognition*.

The converse is equally true, however, as feminist claims for recognition impinge on distribution. Proposals to redress androcentric evaluative patterns have economic implications, which can work to the detriment of some women. For example, top-down campaigns to suppress female genital mutilation may have negative effects on the economic position of the affected women, rendering them “unmarriageable” while failing to ensure alternative means of support. Likewise, campaigns to suppress prostitution and pornography may have negative effects on the economic position of sex workers. Finally, no-fault divorce reforms in the United States have hurt some divorced women economically, even while enhancing women’s legal status.¹² In such cases, reforms aimed at remedying sexist misrecognition have ended up fueling sexist maldistribution. Recognition claims, moreover, are liable to the charge of being “merely symbolic.” When pursued in contexts marked by gross disparities in economic position, reforms aimed at affirming distinctiveness tend to devolve into empty gestures; like the sort of recognition that would put women on a pedestal, they mock, rather than redress, serious harms. In such contexts, recognition reforms cannot succeed unless they are joined with struggles for redistribution. In short, *no recognition without redistribution*.

The moral here, is the need for bifocal vision in feminist politics. This means looking simultaneously through the two analytically distinct lenses of distribution and recognition. Failure to keep either one of those lenses in view can end up distorting what one sees through the other. Only a perspective that superimposes the two can avoid exacerbating one dimension of sexism in the course of trying to remedy another.

The need, in all cases, is to think integratively, as in campaigns for “comparable worth.” Here a claim to redistribute income between men and women was expressly integrated with a claim to change gender-coded patterns of cultural value. The underlying

¹⁰See Nancy Fraser, “Clintonism, Welfare, and the Antisocial Wage: The Emergence of a Neoliberal Political Imaginary,” *Rethinking Marxism* vol. 6, no. 1 (1993) pp. 9-23.

¹¹This was the case with Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), the major means-tested welfare program in the United States. Claimed overwhelmingly by solo-mother families living below the poverty line, AFDC became a lightning rod for racist and sexist anti-welfare sentiments in the 1990s. In 1997, it was “reformed” in such a way as to eliminate the federal entitlement that had guaranteed (some, inadequate) income support to the poor.

¹²Lenore Weitzman, *The Divorce Revolution: The Unexpected Social Consequences for Women and Children in America* (New York: The Free Press, 1985). The extent of the income losses claimed by Weitzman has been disputed. But there is little doubt that some losses have resulted.

premise was that gender injustices of distribution and recognition are so complexly intertwined that neither can be redressed entirely independently of the other. Thus, efforts to reduce the gender wage gap cannot fully succeed if, remaining wholly “economic,” they fail to challenge the gender meanings that code low-paying service occupations as “women’s work,” largely devoid of intelligence and skill. Likewise, efforts to revalue female-coded traits such as interpersonal sensitivity and nurturance cannot succeed if, remaining wholly “cultural,” they fail to challenge the structural economic conditions that connect those traits with dependency and powerlessness. Only an approach that redresses the cultural devaluation of the “feminine” precisely *within* the economy (and elsewhere) can deliver serious redistribution and genuine recognition.

Conclusion

Elsewhere I have discussed other strategies for integrating a politics of redistribution with a politics of recognition.¹³ Here I shall conclude by recapping my overall argument.

I have argued that gender justice today requires both redistribution and recognition, as neither, alone, is sufficient. Thus, I have rebutted arguments that cast the concerns of socialist-feminism as incompatible with those of newer paradigms centred on discourse and culture. Putting aside the usual sectarian blinders, I have proposed conceptions of gender, justice, and recognition that are broad enough to encompass the concerns of both camps. These conceptions are two-dimensional. Spanning both distribution and recognition, they are able to comprehend both the class-like aspects and status aspects of women’s subordination.

The concepts proposed here are also informed by a broader diagnosis of the present juncture. On the one hand, I have assumed that gender intersects other axes of subordination in ways that complicate the feminist project. And I have suggested ways of resolving some of the resulting dilemmas—especially for cases in which claims to redress cultural and religious misrecognition seem to threaten to exacerbate sexism. On the other hand, I have situated my approach to feminist politics in relation to the larger shift in the grammar of claims-making “from redistribution to recognition.” Where that shift threatens to abet neoliberalism by repressing the problematic of distributive justice, I have proposed a two-dimensional political orientation. This approach keeps alive the insights of Marxism, while also learning from the cultural turn.

In general, then, the approach proposed here provides some conceptual resources for answering what I take to be the key political question of our day: How can feminists develop a coherent programmatic perspective that integrates redistribution and recognition? How can we develop a framework that integrates what remains cogent and unsurpassable in the socialist vision with what is defensible and compelling in the apparently “postsocialist” vision of multiculturalism? If we fail to ask this question, if we cling instead to false antitheses and misleading either/or dichotomies, we will miss the chance to envision social arrangements that can redress both the class-like and status aspects of women’s subordination. Only by looking to integrative approaches that unite redistribution and recognition can we meet the requirements of justice for all.

¹³ See especially Fraser, “Social Justice in the Age of Identity Politics,” op. cit.

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