

V / TOWARDS A FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPMENT

by

Maria Mies

Temas: 1. El desarrollo vis-
to desde la perspectiva
feminista 2. Concepto
feminista del trabajo

5.1 Basic Premises and Principles

In the invitation to this lecture series the year 1985 is marked as the end of the International Decade for Women as well as the Fifth Anniversary of the Women and Development Programme at the ISS, thus as an appropriate time for celebration and reflection. The Women and Development Programme has certainly reasons for celebration. I doubt whether the same is true for the International Women's Movement. Whatever may have been achieved or not achieved, one thing is certain, namely that more reflection is necessary on the basic theoretical premises, on the interaction between theory and practice of the movement in various parts of the world.

In the following I shall not make an assessment of the various achievements but focus rather on the perspective for the future. The development of a perspective, of course, implies a certain summing up, the theoretical conclusions from past struggles and reflections. One takes a kind of panorama view and asks, where are we now? And where do we want to go from here? What I present in the following are my personal conclusions from more than fifteen years of involvement in the women's movement, in Women's Studies and women and development issues and struggles. I want to begin my discussion of a feminist perspective of development with some basic premises, ~~and principles~~, which in the course of these years have appeared to me to be the crucial theoretical and political ~~watersheds~~ watersheds.

1. A feminist perspective must start from an analysis of the totality of the reality or of the social relations that make up this reality.

The capitalist-patriarchal paradigm of The White Man which has shaped our present reality since the 16th century is characterized at all levels by dualistic and hierarchically structured divisions which are the basis of exploitative polarizations between parts of the whole: between humans and nature, man and woman, different classes, between different peoples, between development and underdevelopment but also between different parts of the human body, e.g. between 'head' and 'the rest', rationality and emotionality. On the level of ideas these dualistic divisions are found in the hierarchy and polarization between the concepts of nature and culture, mind and matter, progress and retrogression, leisure and labour etc. I call these divisions colonizing divisions.

2. A feminist perspective accepts the human universe as finite

According to this paradigm the totality is not only divided up, but the relationship established between the two poles is a dynamic, hierarchical and exploitative one, by which one side progresses at the expense of the other. This cannot be otherwise, since the world is finite, at least the real world in which we all live. White Man, however, the incarnation of the capitalist patriarch, the architect of 'civilisation', does not accept the finiteness of reality, he wants to be like God: almighty, eternal, omniscient. So he has invented the idea of infinite progress and of infinite evolution from the lower, more primitive to ever higher and more complex levels of being. This idea, of course, is rooted materially in the historical experiences of conquest of patriarchal nomadic peoples, the Jews and the Arians, mainly. Judaic and Christian theology has given the idea of the right to dominate and subordinate nature and of unlimited expansion the necessary religious sanction. "Procreate and multiply and subordinate the earth" says the Old Testament." The scientific revolution in Europe in

the 15-16th century has only secularized this religious idea. (cf. Merchant 1983) and capitalist patriarchy has put it into practice.

3. Exploitation is the underside of development

Since the human universe is finite, "infinite progress" or development is possible only on the basis of dividing up this universe and on the basis of colonizing the actual sources of life (nature, women, primary producers) and by exploiting these "colonies". Exploitation of some parts is therefore the necessary precondition for evolutionary development, or for "progress of productive forces" of other parts. Since the finiteness of human beings and of the earth, however, cannot be speculated away, the retrogression of the 'other side', which is pushed into the dark, cannot be simply interpreted as god-ordained. It is interpreted as a 'lagging behind', as a 'lower stage' of the evolution or of development. In fact the idea of evolutionary change became the centrepiece in the idea of progress of the 'advanced' peoples of the West. They became the symbol of progress for all 'backward' peoples in the same way as men became the symbol of progress for women.

However, the expectation of evolutionary progress for the colonized, namely that the oppressed will reach the level of the oppressors, is a logical impossibility within a finite world. Yet the illusion that they will eventually make it, is held up, by the 'ever progressing', 'advanced' side. This 'progress', however, is more than ever before based on the progressive destruction of the foundations of life, of nature, of human nature, of human relationships and particularly of women.

The economic motor behind this progressively destructive production is the ever-expanding commodity production, the model of never ending economic growth and of capital accumulation. In recent years feminists and many others have begun to articulate their radical rejection of the paradigm of White Man or Man the Hunter (Daly 1978, Mies 1980, Merchant 1983, Griffin 1980, Singh 1976, Capra 1982). In this they reject particularly the dualistic divisions within this model and search to constitute a holistic approach, first to our bodies, then to reality at large. Many of these

authors limit their analysis and their new perspective to the 'cultural' or ideological phenomena or the sphere of the world view or religion (Daly 1978). Important though this may be, it is not sufficient to come to a realistic and politically concrete concept of a new society, a concept which would include the material life of the majority of people in the world. To do so means not only to reject the colonial divisions in the realm of ideas but those which exist in material reality, which shape our everyday life and the world at large.

Underlying these premises are a number of
~~These feminist perspective has some basic principles,~~

which can guide political action at all levels. The following seem to me the most basic.

1. As women have been one of the exploited colonies, a feminist perspective of development has to start with a fundamental rejection of exploitation as precondition for development. Not only of exploitation of women, but also of nature and of other peoples and colonies. Feminist "progress" cannot be based on the retrogression of some other categories of women or men, or of nature. The whole paradigm of related "Progress-Retrogression", or of "Developing-Underdevelopment" has to be transcended.
2. A rejection and abolition of the principle of dualistic and hierarchical divisions (between men and women, different peoples and classes, man and nature, spirit and matter, different parts of our body) based on exploitation for the sake of ever expanding commodity production and capital accumulation.
3. This implies the creation of non-exploitative, non-hierarchical, reciprocal relationships between
 - parts of our body
 - people and nature
 - women and men
 - different sections of one society
 - different peoples

4. A rejection of the colonizing divisions on a theoretical level also means, that we have to begin to see the world as a whole and not as an assembly of totally different parts (first world, third world "modern" culture, "traditional" culture etc.).
5. A necessary consequence of reciprocal relations to ourselves, nature, other human beings and other peoples or nations will be the re-gaining of autonomy over our bodies and our lives. This autonomy means first and foremost that we cannot be blackmailed or forced to do things which are against human dignity in exchange for the means of our subsistence or our life. Autonomy in this sense should not be understood individualistically - as is often done by feminists - because no single isolated woman in our atomised society is able to preserve her autonomy. Autonomy understood as freedom from coercion and blackmail regarding our lives and bodies can be brought about only by collective effort in a decentralized, non-hierarchical way.
6. A rejection of the idea of infinite progress and the acceptance of the idea that our human universe is finite, our body is finite, the earth is finite.
7. The aim of all work and human endeavour is not a never ending expansion of wealth, commodities and capital but human happiness (as the early socialists ~~had seen~~ ^{saw} it) ~~and~~ ^{and} the production and reproduction of life itself. Under capitalist patriarchy production and reproduction of life is a side effect of capital accumulation. Within a feminist perspective, direct production and reproduction of life must become the primary aim of all work.

If we accept these premises and principles, then our discussion of the future perspective should be relevant for women in overdeveloped and underdeveloped countries. Our reflection on "development" moreover, can start with us here in the affluent societies. We do not have to go "to the third world", or wait for the "third world women to come up to our level of development", because we reject this model of development altogether.

This does not mean to ignore actually existing divisions and differences which have been created in the course of history. But it means that we do not start our analysis on the basis of this paradigm but rather from a critique of this paradigm.

If one tries to translate these more or less abstract principles into historical and everyday practice one realizes immediately that the basic concepts, around which everyday life is organised are formidable obstacles in the realisation of these principles. The concept which more than any other has shaped life in capitalist patriarchy is the concept of labour. For a feminist perspective the concept of labour, prevalent in all capitalist and socialist societies, has to be changed radically. From this changed concept will follow a change of work, of work organisation, of the sexual division of labour, of the products, of the relation between work and non-work, of the division between manual and mental work, of the relation between human beings and nature, of the relation to our bodies and a new concept of time. With regard to the concept of labour prevalent in our societies there is no qualitative difference between capitalist societies and socialist societies. In both labour is considered a necessary burden, which has to be reduced, as far as possible, by the development of productive forces or technology. Freedom, human happiness, the realization of our creative capacities, "culture", all these are excluded from the realm of work and are possible only in the realm of non-work, i.e. in leisure time. As necessary labour is defined as that labour which is required for the satisfaction of basic human needs: food, clothing, shelter, a reduction of this labour by machines is then the aim. 'Progress' is then defined as a progressive reduction of necessary labour time and an increase of leisure time when people can at last fulfil their 'higher needs'. The capitalist as well as the socialist utopia is one in which machines (computers, automats, artificially cloned work slaves?) do all necessary labour, and in which people indulge in consumptive and creative activities only.

Before attempting to specify a feminist concept of labour it may be useful to have yet another look at the Marxist concept of labour, because in contradistinction to the capitalists, labour in the theory of socialists is

not only the necessary curse or burden but also the motor that leads mankind to the transition to the true communist society. Let us see whether the concept of labour used by Marx is adequate to fulfil these promises.

In Capital Marx writes:

In fact, the realm of freedom actually begins only where labour which is determined by necessity and mundane considerations ceases; thus in the very nature of things it lies beyond the sphere of actual material production. Just as the savage must wrestle with nature to satisfy his wants, to maintain and reproduce life, so must civilized man, and he must do so in all possible modes of production. With his development this realm of physical necessity expands as a result of his wants, but at the same time, the forces of production which satisfy these wants also increase. Freedom in this field can only consist in socialized men, the associated producers rationally regulating their interchange with nature, bringing it under their common control, instead of being ruled by it as by the blind forces of nature; and achieving this with the least expenditure of energy and under conditions most favourable to, and worthy of their human nature. But it nonetheless still remains a realm of necessity. Beyond it begins that development of human energy which is an end in itself, the true realm of freedom, which, however, can blossom forth only with this realm of necessity as its basis. The shortening of the working day is its basic prerequisite. (Marx, Capital Vol. III: 799-800, emphasis mine)

The most important idea in this passage is that the 'realm of freedom' will not come before 'labour which is determined by necessity ... ceases'. Therefore, the goal of all economic, scientific and political endeavour is the 'shortening of the working day as the pre-requisite of the advent of the realm of freedom, or as Alfred Schmidt writes: 'The problem of human freedom is reduced by Marx to the problem of free time'. (Schmidt 1973:142, italics in the original).

Shortening of the time necessary for the production of the basic requirements to maintain our physical existence will still remain a main social goal when private property and commodity production have been abolished. Marx writes about this in Grundrisse:

If we presuppose production in common, temporal determination naturally remains essential. The less time society needs to produce wheat, cattle etc. the more time is gained for other kinds

of production, material and intellectual. Just as in the case of the single individual, whose all-round development, enjoyment and activity depend on the amount of time saved. All economics ultimately reduces itself to economy in time. (Grundrisse: 89, *italics mine*).

The reduction of 'socially necessary labour time' and the jump to the realm of freedom is brought about by two processes: (1) the ever increasing development of the forces of production, of science and technology, (2) the abolition of private property, of class society, the socialisation of means of production and the socialisation or association of the producers. The first process, will not only lead to a reduction in necessary labour time but also to the rationalization of the associated producers themselves, whose domination over the 'blind forces of nature' is thus immensely increased. This 'rationalisation' not only means domination over and control of external nature, but even more importantly suppression of one's 'instincts', of mere 'nature' or 'blind' 'animal nature' in man. The colonization of this lower, 'wild' nature in man is both a prerequisite for and a consequence of the expanding development of science and technology, or as Marxists put it, the forces of production. The communist utopia is one in which socially necessary labour has been reduced to almost zero, where man has abundant leisure time for his self-realization and for the development of his 'rich individuality'! (cf. Marx, Engels, Collected Works, Vol 5, 1976:47)

Marx and Engels expected the realization of this utopian vision of a communist society, (where women seem to be absent, by the way), from the development of the forces of production, the abolition of private property and the socialisation of production. In Marx' later works however, the idyllic picture of how communist man passes his day becomes blurred.

As Alfred Schmidt observes, according to Marx the process of replacement of human labour by machines and automats will be relatively independent of social organisation. Under communism this process will rather be accelerated than slowed down or stopped:

Marx emphasized in Grundrisse that the ceaseless transformation of nature in industry also proceeds under socialist conditions. The

unity of knowledge and transformation of nature, realized on a large scale in industry, should in future become a still more determining feature of processes of production. He had in mind the total automation (Verwissenschaftlichung) of industry, which would change the worker's role more and more into that of the technical 'overseer and regulator'. (Schmidt 1973: 147; italics in the original)

The total permeation of the industrialised labour process by science, the increased shortening of labour time, the development of automation eventually results in making the worker as the main agent of production obsolete:

He stands beside the process of production, instead of being its main agent. In this metamorphosis, it is neither direct labour, done by man himself, nor the time he takes over it, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive powers, his understanding of nature, and his mastery of the latter through the agency of his existence as a member of society - in one phrase, the development of the social individual - which now appears as the great foundation stone of production and wealth. (Grundrisse 592 et seq., italics mine)

I have elaborated on the Marxist concept of labour, the Marxist views on technological progress and the communist vision of a true society because these ideas are shared by most socialists, also by many feminist socialists. Particularly the view that unlimited progress of science and technology is a kind of 'law of nature' or history and is considered to be the main force to transform human society and social relations, has become a new faith with many people. Even people who are seriously looking for an alternative to destructive capitalism still base their blue-print of a new society on the wonders of technological innovation. Thus for Andre Gorz the time has now come for a straight march into the Marxian paradise, because, with micro electronics, computers and automation, necessary labour can almost be reduced to zero. (Gorz 1984). For Gorz the only problem then is to distribute the rest of this labour among people and to move straight forward to the realization of the Marxian utopia where peoples' main problem will be to fill their leisure time with creative activities. What Gorz and others systematically exclude is the underground of paradise, or 'hell'. This

paradise of the Bright New World is based on continued imperialist exploitation of external colonies and of women, the internal colony of White Man. These will be the people who still produce life, and to a large extent in unfree, housewifized forms of labour in the so-called informal sector. Because with all automation and computerization, people still have a body which needs food and human care etc. and this does not come out of machines. As Claudia von Werlhof has pointed out, this paradise is not for women, but it is based on women's ongoing exploitation worldwide. It is the last desperate effort of White Man to still realize his technocratic utopia of infinite progress and accumulation, based on domination of nature, women and colonies. (v. Werlhof 1984:61).

5.2 Towards a feminist concept of labour

It is obvious from our above discussion that the development of a feminist concept of labour has to begin with a rejection of the distinction between socially necessary labour and leisure and of the Marxist view that self-realisation, human happiness, freedom, autonomy - the realm of freedom - can be achieved only outside the sphere of necessity and of necessary labour and by a reduction (or abolition) of the latter.

1. If we take as our model of a 'worker' not the white male industrial wage worker (irrespective of whether he works under capitalist or socialist conditions) and the 'abstract labour' he performs for a wage, but a mother, we can immediately see that her work does not fit into the Marxian concept. For her work is always both: a burden as well as a source of enjoyment, of self-fulfilment, of happiness. Children may give her a lot of work and trouble, but this work is never totally alienated or dead. Even when children turn out to be a disappointment for the mother, when they leave her eventually or feel contempt for her - as in fact many do in our society - the pain she suffers ~~as a mother~~ is still more humane than the cold indifference of the industrial workers or engineer vis-a-vis his products - the commodities he produces and consumes.

The same unity of work as a burden and work as enjoyment can be found among peasants whose production is not yet subsumed totally under commodity production and under the compulsions of the market and the law of machines. The peasants who have to work from dawn to dusk, during the harvesting season for instance, feel the burden of work more than anybody else in their bodies and in their muscles. But inspite of the hardship of this work it is never only 'a curse'. I remember the times of ^{hay making} ~~reaping~~ or harvesting on our small subsistence farm in my childhood as times of extreme labour intensity for everybody, mother, children, father, and at the same time as times of greatest excitement, enjoyment, social interaction. I found the same phenomenon among poor peasant and agricultural labourer women in India during the season of rice transplantation (Mies 1984). One of the main sources of enjoyment in the work proces is the fact that work also creates social relationships between people. These relationships, created by collective work processes, are based on the fact that human beings need other human beings in order to produce and reproduce their life. The experience of mutuality and common endeavour, in short of the social character of work can go a long way to reduce the burdensome character of work.

The same is true for the work of the artisan or in handicrafts production, as long as this work is not yet fully subsumed under the compulsions of the capitalist market.

The main characteristics of the work-processes described above is that they are all connected with the direct production of life or of use values. A feminist concept of labour has to be oriented towards the production of life as the goal of work and not the production of commodities or wealth (see the quote of Marx above) of which the production of life is then a secondary derivative. The production of immediate life in all its aspects must be the core concept for the development of a feminist concept of work.

2. Apart from the unity of labour as a burden and labour as self-expression of our social nature and as enjoyment, a feminist concept of labour cannot be based on the Marxist (and capitalist) economics of time. The shortening of the daily labour time or of the labour time within a life time cannot be a method to realize a feminist utopia. Women have by now realised that the

reduction of time spent in commodity production does not lead to more freedom for women, but rather to more housework, more non-wage work in household production, more relationship or emotional work, more consumption work. The vision of a society where almost all time is leisure time and labour time is reduced to a minimum, is for women, in many respects, a ~~hor~~^{horrific} ~~vision~~ vision. Not only because housework has never been included in ~~the~~^{the} wage labour that is supposed to be reduced by machines, but also because it will be women who have to restore to the then idle men a sense of reality, meaning and life. A feminist concept of labour has therefore to be oriented towards a different concept of time, where time is not segregated into portions of burdensome labour and portions of supposedly pleasure and leisure, but where times of work and times of rest and enjoyment are alternating and interspersed. Also a long labour day and even a lifetime full of work will then not be felt as a curse but as a source of human fulfilment and happiness.

3. Such a new concept of time, of course, cannot be brought about unless the existing sexual division of labour is abolished. Such a change, however, will not come, as some women expect, by a reduction of the labour day or week through rationalisation and automation. The men, whose weekly or daily or life-labour time has already been shortened through modern technology do not share more of the housework but rather indulge in more drinking, watching ~~of~~ more TV, or in other male leisure time activities. The ~~whole~~ reduction of the work day since the times of Marx and Engels has nowhere resulted in a change of the sexual division of labour, has not resulted in men feeling more responsible for housework, children, the production of life.

4. The fourth element which has to be stressed in a feminist concept of labour is the maintenance of work as a direct and sensual interaction with nature, with organic matter and living organisms. In the prevalent concept of labour this sensual, bodily interaction with nature - human nature as well as external nature - is largely eliminated because more and more machines are inserted between the human body and nature. With the elimination of labour as necessity and burden also the potential of the human body

for enjoyment, for sensuality and for ~~erotic~~ and sexual satisfaction is eliminated. As our body will ever be the basis for our enjoyment and happiness the destruction of sensuality, resulting from the interaction with machines rather than with living organisms will only result in a pathological search for an idolized 'nature'. In a desperate effort to restore this lost sensuality to the (male) body, the female body is mystified as both 'pure or base nature' and as the goal of fulfilment of all desires. The expropriation and eventual destruction of human sensuality by modern machinery is nowhere more pronounced than in the cult of the computers. It is a typical male cult and meant for men whose sensuality has already been destroyed to a large extent by the fact that technological progress has placed them 'beside the process of production instead of being its main agent' (Marx, see quote above). Far from leading to man's 'appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature, his mastery of the latter' (Marx see quote above) the computer technology is indeed destroying all productive human powers, all understanding of nature and particularly all capacity for sensual enjoyment. I consider this one of the reasons why violence against women is increasing in industrialised societies. It may also be one of the reasons why infertility is increasing rapidly among men and women in Western societies.

5. Direct and sensual interaction with nature in the work process is however not yet sufficient. This could also be realized through some sport or hobby. And, indeed, the architects of modern society are visualising an increase of such physical activities as a kind of therapy for people who have been made redundant as workers through automation. But how long will hobbies and sports provide a sense of purpose and meaning to people, even if their daily requirements are provided for by the welfare state?

A feminist concept of labour has to maintain that work retains its sense of purpose, its character of being useful and necessary for the people who do it and those around them. This also means that the products of this labour are useful and necessary and not just ~~luxuries~~ luxuries or superfluous things as ~~most~~ ^{are} most of the modern industrial products ~~are~~ ^{are} the handicrafts that

are made today by women in 'income generating activities' in third world countries.

6. This sense of usefulness and purpose of work and its products, however, can only be restored when the division and the distance between production and consumption is gradually abolished. This division and alienation is today a global one; E.g. third world women produce what they do not know and first world women consume what they do not know.

Within a feminist perspective production of life is the main goal of human activity. This necessitates that the processes of production of necessary things and processes of consumption are again brought together.

5.3 An alternative economy

It is obvious that such a concept of work transcends the framework of an economy based on ever expanding growth of monetary revenue and of ever expanding forces of production in terms of high technology development. As this paradigm has led to overdevelopment of some nations and to underdevelopment of women, nature and colonies, a concept of work oriented towards the production of life requires a reversal and a transcendence of this framework.

The first basic requirement of an alternative economy is a change over, both in the overdeveloped and in the underdeveloped societies, from dependency for their basic subsistence needs: food, clothing, shelter, from economies outside their national boundaries and a movement towards greater autarky. Only societies which are to a large extent self-sufficient in the production of these basic necessities can maintain themselves free from political blackmail and hunger.

In this, self-sufficiency in food is the first requirement. Malcolm Caldwell has shown that self-sufficiency in food, as well as in energy would be quite possible in Britain, with the available cultivable land and its present population. It would equally be possible in any other of the overdeveloped countries of Europe or North America (Caldwell 1977:178). But what is more, if the governments of these overdeveloped countries had not

bribed their working people by importing cheap food, cheap clothes, cheap raw materials etc. from so-called 'cheap labour' countries, these countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America could all be self-sufficient in food, clothing, shelter etc. It is strange that people in the West have already forgotten that all ~~the~~ underdeveloped countries are not only rich in natural and human resources but were also ~~the~~ self-sufficient societies before the conquest of White Man. If the protein food imported to Europe from third world countries in the form of animal feed to produce milk seas, butter mountains etc. was used to feed the local people there would be no hunger in any of these regions (Collins & Lappa 1982). In 1977 90% of the protein concentrates British farmers fed to their livestock was imported from underdeveloped countries. ~~It is also well known that~~ The energy efficiency (the ratio between the energy used to produce food and the energy gained by the consumption of this food) is lowest in the overdeveloped countries with their food mainly produced by agro-industry. Thus the energy efficiency of greenhouse lettuce is only 0.0023, of white sliced bread 0.525 whereas local Mexican corn grown without the use of machinery has an energy efficiency factor of 30.60 (Caldwell, 1977: 179-180).

A largely autarkic economy would necessarily lead towards a change of the existing exploitative and non-reciprocal international division of labour, a contraction of world trade and of export-oriented production both in the overdeveloped countries (whose economy is dependent on export of industrial products) and of underdeveloped countries who have to pay back their credits by exports of mainly primary goods or raw material.

A further consequence of a more or less self-sufficient economy would be, according to Caldwell, a drastic reduction of all non-productive work, particularly in the tertiary sector, a change in the composition of the workforce with a movement away from employment in industries and offices towards employment in agriculture. If people of a given region want to live mainly by the natural and labour resources available in that region it follows that many more people will have to do necessary manual labour in food production. Within such a finite region people would also be careful not to destroy by ^{using} ~~use of~~ too much agricultural chemicals and too much machinery the

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very ecology on whose balance the survival of all depends. Instead of capital intensive farming there would be labour intensive farming. It would be not concentrated in big agri-business farm factories, but in decentralized small farms. Such a change of the international division of labour, the division of labour between agriculture and industry, with agriculture oriented towards food self-sufficiency, many of the elements specified with regard to a changed feminist concept of labour would already be fulfilled, e.g. restoration of labour as necessary and meaningful, of its direct contact with nature or living organisms, possibly also a different notion of labour time, the narrowing down of the gap between production and consumption and more autonomy of producers-consumers over what they produce and consume. As Caldwell points out, this radical restructuring of the economy, is not only a beautiful dream or a case of hortatory politics, but will increasingly become a necessity particularly for workers who have been made redundant for good by the rapid development of high tech and automation. He reminds us that ~~already~~ in 1976 massive unemployment in Italy ~~was~~ led to a big movement of workers back to the land. About 100.000 workers returned to farming (Caldwell 1977:181). A similar movement back to the land happened two years ago in India during the strike of the textile workers in Bombay which lasted for almost a year. Such people may be the first to realize that one cannot eat money and that food does not grow out of computers.

Most ecologists and people who are searching for a radical alternative to the destructive society we live in would agree with the above ideas. So would also many feminists. But they would discover that the brief description of an alternative economy, spelt out by Caldwell, is again silent about the non-reciprocal, exploitative division of labour between the sexes. The perspective of a relative autarkic economy based on non-exploitative relations to the ecology, other peoples, people within a region, on small, decentralized units of production and consumption is for feminists not broad enough if it does not start with a radical change of the sexual division of labour. In most ecological writings, however, the 'woman question' is either not mentioned at all, or it is simply added on to a long list of other more urgent, more 'general' issues. This 'adding on' will no longer

do if we want to change the existing inhuman men-women relation. The conception of an alternative economy is therefore not only incomplete without the goal of transcending the patriarchal sexual division of labour, it will rather be based on the illusion of change and therefore not be able to truly transcend the status quo.

A feminist conception of an alternative economy will include all that was said before about autarky and decentralization. But it will place the transformation of the existing sexual division of labour (based on the breadwinner-housewife model) at the centre of the whole restructuring process. This is not mere narcissistic self-indulgence of women but the result of our historical research as well as our analysis of the functioning of international capitalist patriarchy. Feminists do not start with the external ecology, economy and politics, but with the social ecology, the centre of which is the relation between men and women. Autonomy over our bodies and lives has been the first and most fundamental demand of the international feminist movement. Any search for ecological, economic and political autarky must start with the respect of the autonomy of women's bodies, their productive capacity to create new life, their productive capacity to maintain life through work, their sexuality. A change in the existing sexual division of labour would imply first and foremost that the violence that characterizes capitalist patriarchal man-woman relations worldwide will be abolished not by women but by men. Men have to refuse to define themselves any longer as Man-the-Hunter. Men have to start movements against violence against women if they want to preserve the essence of their own humanity.

This demand of ^{women's} autonomy over ^{their} women's bodies also implies that any state control over women's fertility has to be rejected. Women have to be freed ~~of~~ ^{from} their status of being a natural resource for individual men as well as for the state as the Total Patriarch. True women's liberation will be the cheapest and most efficient method to restore the balance between population growth and food production. This is indeed the main flaw in Caldwell's otherwise excellent ^{presentation} ~~expose~~ of an alternative, homeostatic society. 'Population control' is still considered the responsibility of the state, it is not in the hands of women. They are not considered as fully responsible

human subjects as long as men or the state still tries to extend its control over their fertility.

Secondly, in an alternative economy men have to share as far as possible the responsibility for the immediate production of life, for childcare, housework, the care of the sick and the old, the relationship work, all work so far subsumed under the term 'housework'. In a community keen to preserve its autarky and keen to follow a non-exploitative path of human development this 'housework' could not be paid. It would have to be free work for the community. But each man, each woman and also children would have to share this most important work. This would then immediately have the effect that men would have less time for their destructive production in industry, less time for their destructive research, less time for their destructive leisure time activities, less time for their wars. Positively put, they would regain the autonomy and the wholeness of their own bodies and minds, they would re-experience work as both a burden and enjoyment and finally also develop a different scale of values altogether with regard to work. It would also mean the end of the breadwinner-housewife model. How?

These processes of liberation are interrelated. It is not possible for women in our societies to break out of the cages of patriarchal relations unless the men begin a movement in the same direction. A men's movement against patriarchy ~~would not be~~ ^{not} motivated by benevolent paternalism but by the desire to restore to themselves a sense of human dignity and respect. How can men respect themselves if they have no respect for women?

In the same way the overdeveloped peoples have to start rejecting and transcending the economic paradigm of ever increasing commodity production and consumption as model of progress for the underdeveloped economies. Yet, the change of the exploitative international division of labour cannot come within a short time. Also the establishment of ecologically balanced more or less autarkic economies will take time and demand an immense intellectual moral and physical effort. But the change of the sexual division of labour could be started immediately. Each man and woman could start at their individual level; groups of women and men could develop different models, larger political movements like the peace movement, the ecology

movement, national liberation movements could immediately experiment with a changed sexual division of labour and develop their alternative ideas about a better society from these central experiences. If this would happen, feminists would lose their scepticism regarding many of these movements, because time and again we have seen, that women's mobilization for such movements ended up with the old or a new patriarchal division of labour.

There is still another reason why feminists must insist on the centrality of the change of the sexual division of labour. The analysis of the socialist countries has shown that the maintenance or the creation of the bourgeois patriarchal sexual division of labour and of the nuclear family is the apparently insignificant gate through which reactionary forces can again find entry into a society which had tried to free itself from the clutches of imperialism and capitalism. As long as the sexual division of labour is not changed within the context of an alternative economy, capitalism will not be abolished. (Mies 1985)

It is precisely by putting one of these contradictions into the limelight and by pushing the others into the darkness that capitalist patriarchy has been able to build up and maintain its dominance. The governments in Europe and USA will try to solve the ecology and economic crisis in their countries by dumping their dangerous factories and products in underdeveloped countries. ^{will provide} ~~and~~ the cheap food, cheap clothes, cheap sexual services etc. ~~additionally~~ for this class of white rentiers by further exploitation of Third World countries and peoples. ^{of course} ~~sure~~, there are also white women who will belong to that international class of non-producing rentiers who are maintained and ^{fed} ~~alimented~~ by increased exploitation of Third and Second World countries (e.g. China) but by and large, women in the overdeveloped countries will increasingly share the destiny of the underdeveloped countries. By their invisible, low paid or unpaid work they ~~will~~ provide the basis upon which the international male white class will march into the 'post-modern paradise' (Gorz).

5.4 Intermediate steps

In discussions about alternatives to the existing destructive 'order' ^{a number of} ~~the~~ questions arises immediately: 'How does one get from here to there? How do such beautiful utopias help us today to change reality into the direction we want? Are the powers that stand against us not overwhelming: internationally operating capital, the big transnational corporations, the ever-increasing interplay between the scientific, the economic, the military and the political establishments, the rivalry of the two superpowers and their never-ending spiral of producing ever more destructive arms, the extension of these destructive weapons into the outer space etc. etc.?'* Vis-a-vis this formidable threat to all life, many women and men in the west feel utterly helpless and tend to close their eyes and wait in a defeatist manner for the unavoidable holocaust.

I think feminists cannot afford such defeatism, not only because it ~~would be~~ ^{is} suicidal but also because it is unrealistic. As long as class ^{has} society ~~exists~~, the collapse of a ruling class has been projected as the collapse of the universe. This is also the case today with the threat of the collapse of the capitalist-patriarchal growth model. Women worldwide have nothing to gain in their human development from the further growth of this gigantic parasite. On the contrary, ~~therefore~~ we should here and now begin to refuse our allegiance and our complicity with this system. Because women are not only victims of capitalist patriarchy, they are also, in varying degrees and qualitatively different forms, accomplices and collaborators of this system. This is true particularly for middle class women worldwide, and particularly in industrialised countries. If we want to regain autonomy over our bodies and life in general we have to start by giving up our collusion with capitalist patriarchy. How can that be done?

I think the principles and strategy could be the same for women in overdeveloped and underdeveloped countries, but the tactical steps would be different. In the following ^{section} I shall discuss some concrete steps that could be taken in the direction of freeing ourselves from the clutches of capitalist patriarchy. I shall concentrate on what could be done by western women.

1. Autonomy over consumption

An area which has been left out almost totally ^{of} political struggle in the west has been the area of consumption. Trade unions, political opposition groups and also the women's movement have addressed their protest and demand either to the bosses of the economy or to the state, or to men generally. Rarely have they discussed their own role in the exploitative system. And yet, it is common ~~some~~ knowledge, that capitalism can not function unless it is able to create and expand the market for its ever growing amount of material and non-material commodities. This market is provided by us, the buyers of these commodities. It is mainly provided by the masses in the overdeveloped countries who have the purchasing power due to the exploitative international and sexual division of labour. It is also provided, to a lesser degree, by the urban middle classes in the underdeveloped countries. And it is provided to a large extent by the states and their monopolies over huge areas of the economy, e.g. education, health, the postal system, defence. We may not be able to influence the whole marketing system. But a consumer liberation movement, started by women, who as housewives are important agents of consumption and crucial pillars of the market, could go a long way ~~in the overthrow or rather~~ undermining ~~of~~ the capitalist-patriarchal system.

Such a movement can be started immediately by each and every woman on an individual basis. The decision what to buy and what not to buy is not totally pre-determined by our needs and what is offered in the market. Perhaps more than 50% of what is bought and consumed in households in overdeveloped countries and overdeveloped classes is not only superfluous but also harmful. Particularly the products of the new growth-industries are no longer meant for the satisfaction of basic human needs but for the creation and expansion of new addictions of passive consumers. We cannot say that we have no choice ^{whether} to buy or not to buy these things. Otherwise we hand over the last bit of our autonomy to Mr. Capital and agree to become mere puppets of consumption. Thus, the individual refusal of buying superfluous and basically harmful luxury items would enlarge the area of freedom within

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each individual woman. Apart from a boycott of luxury commodities, feminists, if they want to be true to their political goals, have to boycott all items which re-inforce a sexist image of woman, or anti-woman tendencies in our society. Thus the new wave of 'beautifying women', created by the garment and cosmetics industries in a kind of counter-attack against the feminist refusal to shape their bodies and appearance according to the standardised model of an 'attractive and sexy' woman, can be successfully disturbed if women openly boycott cosmetics and new sexy fashion fads.

Similarly the manipulation of women as housewives and mothers carried out by the multinational food and pharmaceutical industries and others can be thwarted if women consciously refuse as far as possible to buy certain items.

A further essential criterion for the selection of commodities to be boycotted is the degree of exploitation of third world producers, particularly of third world women, incorporated and materialised in the commodities. A boycott of such items would therefore mean both/ a liberation of women in the overdeveloped countries from a sexist image of woman and more autonomy of poor third world women over their environment and subsistence production.

But how do we know about the various exploitative relations which are materialised in the commodities we buy and consume? How do we know that the lipstick I buy contains the starvation of women in Bihar as well as the torture of thousands of guinea pigs and mice in the laboratories of the MNC's? ~~And~~ Capitalist commodity production, with the almost total division between producers and consumers in an international, social and sexist division of labour, has been able to mystify almost totally the exploitative relations incorporated in the commodities. Blind consumers are linked to blind producers!

A feminist consumer liberation movement therefore has to start with the lifting of this blindness, with a de-mystification of the commodities, a re-discovery of the exploitation of women, nature, colonies, inherent in these commodities, and an effort to transform the market relations which link us de facto to women, men, animals, plants, the earth etc into true human

relations. This means to re-discover concrete people behind the abstract commodities.

A consumer liberation movement would therefore also imply a new and fascinating learning process, a conscientization, different from that of the early feminist consciousness-raising groups, which would indeed clarify our minds about the ~~existing~~ ^{actual} relations within which we live and work both as objects and as subjects. Concretely this means that feminist groups in the over-developed and underdeveloped countries could begin to make ~~such~~ studies of ~~certain~~ products selected according to the criteria spelt out above, ^{to} publish their results and feed them into the international networks of women's groups and organisations who would be ready to join such a consumer liberation movement. The joining of hands of feminists in Europe and the USA with women's groups in Third World countries in a common struggle against dangerous drugs and contraceptives may serve as an example of such joint actions.

This last point brings us to the question of the politics of such a movement. Although it can and should be started by each individual woman in her immediate surrounding, where she has a certain amount of power and freedom of choice, it is clear that individual acts of boycott will not have the desired impact on the big capitalist corporations. Only a social and political boycott movement could have a major effect. This means women's groups or organisations should publicly announce their boycott campaign, accompany their actions with information and analysis about the exploitative relations in the product they have selected as target of their campaign and create as wide a publicity for this movement as is possible without betraying its basic principles. The formation of such action-and-reflection-groups would by itself have another liberating effect: It would liberate women in the affluent societies, particularly housewives, from their atomised, isolated existence within their tiny cages called household, liberate them from their depressions, drug addictions, the housewife-syndrom and their need for compensatory consumption. It would bring them back into the public sphere and make them aware of their place in the worldwide network of social relations.

2. Autonomy over production

A feminist consumer boycott movement would be one step in the direction of our liberation. Another, equally necessary step, which would follow from the first, would be a movement to regain control over the production processes as such. This, of course, implies in the last analysis that women and producers in general regain control over the means of production. But before this can be achieved the control over the production decisions could become a goal for trade unions and other working class organisations. It is absolutely irrational that the western working classes accept ~~the~~ production decisions, e.g. the automation of production, of arms production, of production of dangerous chemicals, of luxury items, ~~and~~ in the name of preserving their jobs and of an abstract idea of progress. ~~It is obvious~~ ^{but} ~~that~~ ^{like} it is obvious that they will neither save their jobs by this strategy nor avoid this destructive production. But ~~the~~ male workers often forward the argument that they have no choice, because they have to 'feed a family'. This argument is partly an alibi, because women are as much the breadwinners of their families as the men. But women who are serious about our liberation could go a long way to regain a greater measure of autonomy over production. This could start by ourselves producing more of the things we need. It could also mean that urban women could think of ways and means to grow food in the cities.

It could further mean to establish new local markets between small ecologically oriented peasant producers and urban women, where a direct link between production and consumption would be re-established. Through such a link it would not be difficult for urban women and children to go to the countryside in their holidays, but not as idle tourists, but as farm workers, who would work on the farms of such small peasants for an exchange of the products thus commonly produced. -This would come near Caldwell's vision of diverting industrial labour to labour intensive agriculture, but in contrast to this it would not be the state but producers-consumers themselves who would organise such a system of labour exchange between city and village. It would be important, however, to make sure that such a system of

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production-consumption, ~~will~~^{did} not degenerate into the well-known 'informal' sector which then, in a dual economy would only serve to feed the formal sector which would go on as before to produce its destructive high tech and where the informal sector production would again mainly subsidize the formal sector. Therefore autonomy over production must eventually also become a demand of the trade unions, of men and women in the trade unions and other movements like the ecology and alternative movements. Such movements could be a direct challenge to the classical wage-workers self-image that they are the necessary 'breadwinners' of their families. With increasing autonomy over consumption and production the myth that capital and wage workers are the producers of life will have to disappear.

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