Why do we need the feministic theories
or one more time about publicity and privacy

Zuzana Kiczková

Ten years after the change, accompanied by the orientation to the open society and with more or less succeeded trials to democratise the society, more and more woman organisations with different programmes and aims have emerged in Slovakia. In spite of the activities of some feminists (the magazine ASPEKT, the feminist lectures at the University) the word feminism causes fear, and in the intellectual circles a belief exists that, the feministic theories are totally strange „for us„, without becoming acquainted with the woman researches in the West. Fear of the import of the „aggressive American„, feminism hangs also among other things on the effort not to politicise the woman questions and to unite the publicity in the spirit of antifeminism at the same time. The most women take part in it as well. Among the woman-members of different woman organisations one often hears radical dissociation from feminism as well and the argumentation in the name of universalism: the women are human beings and citizens, and the citizen’s principle is completely superior to the gender principle. Many of them speak in the name of the ideological macro subject „we„, women with consequence: the non-acknowledgement of the right equality of other ways of existence, vital interests, moral views, etc. Universalistic positions, which do not accept the coexistence of alternatives and pluralism, create the basis for the reproduction of deeply rooted prejudices and gender stereotypes.

Although the most women have quite concrete experience with different forms of inequality, they cannot articulate a woman agenda clearly and convincingly as a fixed constituent of the political culture without adequate intellectual creativity, high social sensitivity and cultivated woman solidarisation. It shows up that the social state of the women is not reflected automatically in a political representation. On the one hand it is important that the processes of the increasing self-consciousness, self-dignity, active discontent together with the phenomena of the violence against women change into the political interest of the women. On the other hand the name of the social-structural patriarchats, its power mechanisms and its past genesis, must constitute necessary politics. To do this, one needs however the feministic theories and their modifications in the application to our cultural and political context.

Without an application of the categories I do not see any possibility of the discovery of rule structures and of general (and above all political) sensibilisation for power mechanisms. The methodological capacity of publicity and privacy categories in order to witness that the problem the most often concernig women – the harmonisation of professional activity and family obligations (or more negatively defined as a double load) in the circumstances of the society transformations is not only ever more current, but it is also dependent on the concrete structure, function and the connection between two spheres.

The subject of the analysis should be evenly a special feature of the hierarchical connection between publicity and privacy of different values. This type of the connection has a very strong influence on the way of woman existence, it preserves certain characteristic features of traditionality, cherishes the symbol of a „family bread-winner„, it delays the reorganisation of the parenthood and leads to the extreme feminisation of some economic fields etc.

In the focal point of further considerations there are the mechanisms and power calculations in the process of the feminisation of teaching. What a role has here the moral obligation of woman teachers, which is naturally expected, and which reminds of a conspicuous responsibility of women for the reproduction work.

The publicity and privacy topic from the gender perspective can form an important space for the discussions between the women of „the West„, and „the East„. Despite different experiences there is a common initial thesis: publicity and privacy are connected together with a sex specific power asymmetry.
It is not easy for women to discover and understand that they lived in a socially structured patriarchate and they continue to live in this way. It is not amazing either. Nevertheless the concept of the woman emancipation stood in real socialism on the principles of formal equality, which did not guarantee automatically the real actual equality between the sexes either. The discrepancy between formal equality and real inequality was not only inarticulated, but first of all neutralised in abstract theoretical considerations and concepts of human beings as such. This situation shows itself in a form of the direct and indirect, hidden women discrimination. On the one hand the long life of the sex-stereotype with its rigidity, constrained power, exclusion tendency and on the other hand the power mechanisms reproducing the feminisation of some economic sectors, make the perception of disadvantages more difficult.

Jessica Benjamin examines with a lot of understanding, why it is really so hard, to understand this „concealment„. According to her opinion „the centre of the male rule lies not in direct outbreaks of personal force, but in the social rationality whether they are defended by men or not. Male rule works, like Webers said about the rationalisation, through the hegemony of the personified organisation: through formal rules, standing for possible interactions of autonomous individuals; through instrumental knowledge, which consists in the control of the subject over the world of objects; through the principle of the professional increase, which arranges itself neither according to the needs nor the tradition. This proteic impersonal power does make the male rule so hard to be understood„. (1, p 209).

Structure, character and relationship between the public and the private sphere are already for a long time the subject of feministic analyses. The existence of two mutual relative separate life spheres or the division of the society into the public sphere, which are associated the most often in the institutionally organised work, politics, art and activities in the context of this area, and into the private sphere as a place of family and household, is sex specific. Men and women in such a divided world live in a different way. In many studies feministic theoreticians show (see 2, 3) that the birth of publicity as a new form of action fields and communication structures, which brought at the same time the citizenship at the end of 18th and at the beginning of 19th century in consequence of global economic and social changes, co-existed together with the exclusion of women from this sphere. The man was placed in the public sphere; the woman took care of the welfare service and responsibility for the values and activities in the private sphere. This social organisation of the relations between the sexes consists in a specific logic which, as Eva Kreisky (2, p 45) and Sabine Lang (3, p 83) write; a hierarchisation is immanent and flows into the entire reproduction sphere and degradation of the female work. At the same time this construction is manly motivated, because the exclusion of women from this field should be confirmed, which in the modern society has become central. „The identification of public spheres with the manly common sense and rational action field, and the private sphere as a field of the feminine feeling, consolidated by irrational irresponsible action patterns spreads out as a thread through the political philosophy and society analyses„. (3, p 85)

The experiences of the women in Slovakia and in the Chech Republic of their staying in the public and private sphere differ considerably from the experiences of the women in the western world. The woman exclusion from the public sphere as a certain distinct „gender problem„, does not stay in the foreground. Although today the unemployment rate is in the first place in the hierarchy of social problems and it is perceived by both men and women almost to the same extent. (4, p 112-113). The small proportional difference between the unemployment rate of men and women does not create any problem by which the women would not be concerned.

In other words the experiences do not depend on the exclusion, as it is articulated by the western feminists, but the stress is put rather on the problems of adjustment to already existing masculine society structure and difficulties resulting from the double existence in both spheres. The last mentioned, when it is not to be controlled because of different reasons, is not characterised on the level of the individual experience of the woman as a double burden and the
sociologists call that as a double load. My initial thesis is: the essential problem of the women in Slovakia is for at least two generations the problem of „double load„, (double burden) as a result of the woman emancipation not to be overcome during 40 years of the real socialism, of which the high woman employment was characteristic.

Even after 1989 a significant (numerous) escape of women into the household did not take place. One can, however, say that great part of women was and is still confronted with the „double load„, and it has the concrete experiences of staying in both public and private spheres, of permanent oscillating between them. In each case this double staying is dynamic, full of tension, and it is not and it was not sexually neutral. Its specific character expresses itself in looking for different compromises within the range beginning from a successful attempt to a personal refusing and resignation from one of the perspectives. The most often emerging phenomenon is the keen awareness of the lack of time, personal fatigue, dissatisfaction with not finished work after earlier imaginations, not fulfilled dreams and ambitions and many other forms.

On the level of everyday consciousness very many women know that it is they who, as opposed to men, are much more often confronted with the „double load„, and it is they who are responsible for functioning of the family and their household in the end. It is naturally expected from them, and their surrounding, their relatives and friends judge and estimate them according to these criteria. Many moral conflict situations for women have been caused by the confrontation with strongly idealised mother stereotypes. This stereotype is considered as an unspoken premise, within the meaning of which the feature of identity between a good mother and a mother in the household is shown and so an indirect suspicion emerges that the woman, who is interested in the professional work, does not have to be a good mother.

The woman emancipation during the time of the real socialism enabled our women to enter in the world of work. In order to achieve that they did not have to struggle for that as opposed to the women in the western countries. The motivation to go to work was found within the range of two margin areas: the pressure, connected with the necessity, to secure the financial situation of the family and the bases of self-realisation on the other hand. The most often, however, it was about different combinations of both bases with emphasised possibility, about establishing new relations with other people at work and about not being isolated in household. This tendency is continued today and as the sociological research in the publication „She and He in Slovakia„, shows, that women consider „also as the most important motive of woman’s work, apart from the earning motive, the compensation from the character of the work done, from the contact with people, a wish to be a pattern for their children, to use their education and also feeling of the necessary work„, (4, p 67-68).

I agree with Zora Butorova´s opinion that „the employment of women became a constant part of their way of living and a value orientation of the Slovakian population as well„, (4, p.68) It does not, however, mean that women escape from the family world. During the whole bygone emancipation time women were understood as workers and mothers. Men as workers but not at the same time as fathers. This personal acceptance does not have to identify with the individual, personal self-acceptance at all. When we, however, look at staying of men and women in the public and private spheres from the sex-differentiating perspective, we can ask: is the employment and family for both men and women, to the same degree, the frame of reference? Does the difference in the education of identity of men and women exist in the modern time of independence from staying in two different worlds?

In the modern society it is usually and naturally considered that the man leads away his status, presents himself in front of others and receives the acceptance from others from his professional integration. His familiar establishing is not important for his public representation, marginal and not articulated. His status-creating function is first of all led away from his work„In opposition to pre-industrial patriarchat he stops being the father of the representation of the male domination but behind him there is a man, whose familiar establishing is not important
and who considers his work as an individual service and merit..., Alena Wagnerova writes (8, p 83).

In the case of women the situation is different. Family must inevitably create the basic reference frame of her identity and life project according to the certain representation picture. During socialism this picture of the woman as a worker and as well as a mother was supported and reproduced. Later on I want to show how the patriarchal power has just calculated with this double role.

It is not only important to remark how women were and are considered but also how they consider themselves. According to the Chech sociologist Alena Vodakova the world of the family remained the primary social world for them. She writes: „The strongest value, which makes the women weak and strong at the same time, is often described and analysed relation to family. It is the characteristic feature of the entrances into the work and public spheres. Family was and still remains the primary social world or microworld„, (5, p 45). Women themselves accept their family role. Again Alena Vodakova: „the Chech women does not bother at all that they are considered as a symbol of „a hearth wardress„, (only 8% of women bother about it)... and so the conclusion can be drawn that women accept their traditional family roles as long as they are not interpreted in pejorative sense. The feeling of responsibility for upbringing of children intervenes in this inclination and the sole high value of the child, which indirectly results from searched connection„, (5, p 45) The similar results are shown by a Slovakian sociologist T. Rosova. „The status and the identity allow women into the society in the majority of their roles, especially of the „hearth wardress„, role or warmth of family hearth, of motherly, sociologising and educational role„, (6, p 113)

„Traditional milestones of feminine productivity„ – family, household, children, parents, (neighbour’s help) show for the woman a significant potential (sphere, medium) of the quest or fulfilment of the sense. It is probably surprising how much has remained here from tradition in spite of all political changes. One could say „modernised„, traditionality, because the methods and forms have changed, but the identification with the „wardress„, „protector„, image survived although each woman fills it with quite different concrete contents. The power of survival is connected with the question of the sense or the quest for reasonable spaces. „Private„, can „also mean protection of personality, which is especially important for the woman„, (10, p 68)

The woman sociologists ascertain simultaneously „the social status of the woman full of conflicts or the discrepancy of „the feminine social status„, (9, p 19)

It is possible to overcome this conflict? Can one create a kind of harmony between these two roles? Is the harmonisation only a utopia? Is the inter-role conflict only a personal problem of the woman and does it depend on her talents and skills or is it about an important politics?

In the mentioned publication it is written not about the removal but about the reduction of the double load of women, and the following solutions are suggested, as for example „shortened working time; development and more accessible services as far as prices are concerned; enlargement of technical possibilities which make the home work easier; and at last not proportionate division of family duties and work in household between man and woman„, (4, p 68)

The change of work division in household and actually also partial change of the private sphere is undoubtedly one of the most important conditions for the possibility of better self-realisation of women at work and in the public life. That would, however, also abolish the traditional and adopted stereotype of the division into manly and womanly work as well as their social and moral acceptance. Simultaneously it would point out the change possibility of the public and private sphere, the limit shifting between them.

If care is traditionally understood as the woman duty, certain symptom of proportionate duty division, as far as child upbringing is concerned, does exist, in the case of which the expectations of women are very high (the researches have shown that the difference between the real, actual situation and the ideal wishful situation in the case of women come up to 40-50%)

In: Gender in transition in Eastern and Central Europe. Berlin: Trafo, 2001, s. 124 - 132
and at the same time certain kindness on the part of men also exists (although here the difference oscillate between 20%). The differentiation, which has an influence upon the preference of partner division for the childcare, results from education and age. „Women with an academic education; coming from the families with good intellectual basis, more often vote for role division. Also, as far as men are concerned, the educated men and especially those, whose parents had better level of education, involve themselves into the partner division of the responsibility for the child upbringing. More often they belong to the younger age category,“ (4, p 76) as it is proved in the sociological research „She and He in Slovakia,“

This potential approval, which is absolutely connected with the high family value, could be used due to creating of adequate social circumstances in favour of both women and men as well. Here one can see the place of any possible subversion of adopted, repeated sex stereotypes. We lack though more thorough analysis of the circumstances, under which it could lead to significant change of the mentioned stereotypes which are connected with stronger and larger realisation of the partner relation pattern and the work division e.g. in the child care. This change or „the reorganisation of parenthood,“ (Jessica Benjamin) can soften and weaken the culturally reproduced sex dualism already by the fact that when the parent image is disturbed as a polar contradiction, the children fail to perceive the characteristic features of the father and the mother as significant identity objects. And although J. Benjamin appreciates the significance of „the reorganisation of parenthood,“ very much and she recognises another, changed identity pattern for children as well, she focuses our attention on the fact that parents „activate, also if unconsciously, the identity of their child with the agreement to the existing culture: continuity in the case of girls, discontinuity in the case of boys,“ (1, p 210)

According to many woman theoreticians the reorganisation of parenthood itself cannot overcome and eliminate the sex polarisation and parent images as polar oppositions. Other aspects of the rationalisation should be also touched – first of all the relations between publicity and privacy. For the problem is formulated in the sense of relation between family and social organisation. The measures taken to have an effective change on the grounds of partnership and acceptance cannot remain only in the private sphere. We have to direct ourselves into the public sphere, first of all into the working class. Having such a problem type we make ourselves more conscious of the connection between the family construction and the construction of the work place. Therefore such a (new) construction of the family, in which the partner division of the childcare is preferred, requires also an adequate (new) form of the work place, family policy of the State, legislative regulations. This lies however within the authority of the state and new, theoretical way of thinking of the relations between the public and the private sphere. The current experiences of feministic discussions cannot be missing in the analyses of the public and the private space (see 3).

These questions are relevant in this connection: which structure and function does the private and the public spheres have and what is their common relationship?

Since the times of Max Weber the social theoreticians presuppose as a basic sign of the modernisation process – the rationality principle. J. Benjamin focuses our attention on which type of the rationality here is actually made conspicuous. It is about „such rationality, which reduced the social world into the objects of exchange, of calculation and control - in reality it is the male rationality,“ (1, p 178) „Die social rationalisation has the paradoxical tendency to neutralise the sex difference and nevertheless to intensify the dichotomies, which are rooted in it. The structures of the dichotomies are frequently neutral and abstract from the sex; and nevertheless they can become sex specific any time again,“ (1, p 209).

It is substantial that the public sphere is an important space of the form of the autonomous subject. Its linkage from dependency and "denial of the common acceptance" has besides an important consequence - the devaluation of such values (e.g. care), which are connected with the dependence on the basis of personal relations in the private sphere.
The presence of women in the public sphere, their always massive participation does not mean that they modify in this way automatically valid rights of the “man world.” Women are not real subjects and their strategy of staying exists in the adjustment to the rules, standards, values, and different types of depersonalised power relations. It has deep historical reasons that the today's woman retained for herself the inclination to certain work activities (5) and derived from them the different attitude towards work. Their work domain remains in fact in personal services, also in modern and diversified form.

If we accept the different attitude of women towards work, without essentialistic reason to accept and to speak about the work domain of women, whose personal services, care and upbringing remained, as well as preference of certain values, and the orientation has deeper cultural tradition, it remains however interesting to pursue, what has happened with these values in the time of the modern society. What meaning and duty are acknowledged and attributed to them. Everything, what is in the public sphere, has primacy, this world of production, goods, money, and services. The private - reproductive complex steps into the functions of the supplement, service, subordination, compensation and it is so in a hierarchical relationship. Then the meaning and the value of care are completed, in reality, however, less evaluated or underestimated.

The relationship between the private and the public sphere is not only in its relative separation and inequality, but first of all in the hierarchy, because a higher value, importance and so called „objective,” meaning is vested in the values, activities, results, etc. in the public sphere (thus in institutionally organised work and in political area) in the modern society – both the capitalistic and the socialist one. „Money and money effect becomes here gradually the only value measure. Values, which do not have any price, are not evaluated within the frames of this system. The rule of men over women takes the form of the dominance over market relations, which are established in rationality, function and effectiveness, whose representatives are men; over the relations of others, based on welfare service, care and solidarity, which cannot become a commodity only when the women are traditional representatives of the price of its negation and destruction,” (7, p 83).

The power structure, which did not make the disadvantage and discrimination valid from the point of view of the formal equality, counted a priori victim readiness, reliability or responsibility of the women, although its public rhetoric promised women rather glorified and even better morning. Thus they relied on the values, whose representatives are women and on such activities, or work domains, which are (historically) closely associated with women and are characterised as „womanly work.”

At first sight perhaps a paradox, but lately it led to such processes, which caused a new type of the protection of the privacy. All sociological investigations show the high preference of the family as the core of the privacy, and the dominant power realises this fact. In the transformation time, when the problems of the social functions of the state grow, one considers privacy as symbol of security, stability, care etc. in such a way that he shifts some duties and obligations, which the state is to fulfil, onto the family in the name of its independence and responsibility.

„The compensation duty of the private sphere,” grows and the family forms „a private refugee,” (10, p 20). Here it is important to differentiate at least two functions: functional – private sphere serves as a place for the reproduction of labour manpower, and worth or sense creating - when this sphere serves as a place of searching for sense and values. This distinction enables to detect the danger of the dominance of the functional over sense-creating duties. Shift of some social functions and duties of national institutions onto the family – childcare (many kindergartens were closed, very expensive dwellings for adult children etc.), the care of the old and ill family members – is particularly for women an enormous burden. And the women, independently of their social class affiliation, continuously remain responsible for the reproduction and supplying work in the family. The sociological data show that the women in Slovakia expect more activity and assistance from the government and ministries (83,8%) to
improve family living conditions. To the question how long children need a material help from parents, the majority of the responses was to the beginning of children’s work, but the half of the responses was the understanding that two thirds of the families always suffer from a long-term financial shortage, etc. (14, p 11).

On the one hand these statements show the difficult situation of families and particularly of women, on the other hand the passive point of our women is shown here, who still believe until today that they „are given a present,” by the State (recidivism of paternalism). „The problem situations of the objective character – shortage of money and time in families " (14, p 12) form apparently the basis for the sex-stereotype reproduction: man as „a breadwinner”, whose most important duty is to bring home money and woman as a careful and a responsible person for household functioning. The reorganisation of parenthood remains then only on the level of the individual choice of life strategy without real social-economic conditions and political and legislative support. Once again the ambivalence of bizarre amalgam of traditionality and modernity has been shown. We come briefly to the problem of „feminisation of work„, with the emergence of „low wage sectors„, especially in the public education. What is hidden behind the feminisation of some areas? What kind of power calculation?

If we regard the reward from the point of view of economic sectors, the highest wages are in such areas, where men work the most often (energetics, chemistry, telecommunication system, printing industry, mining industry, traffic etc.). The high concentration of women is in such economic sectors, where there are already traditionally the lowest wages on the average: the processing industry (textile production, clothing industry, leather finishing, agriculture, public education, health service, services, area of the social work). Feminisation problem of some areas has deepened in the last years even more and the woman representation in the public education and health service has exceeded today in Slovakia the limit of 80%. In both one fights for surviving, without any development strategy. At the same time it led to the transformation of the men predominantly (particularly on prominent positions) into the economic sectors, where the wages have (enormously) risen, e.g. in banking (see 12).

In education the calculisation agrees with the cheap labour manpower and by means of the thesis – profession as a vocation – is established. The moral obligation sounds: it is naturally expected of you, the teachers. The majority of the teachers - today already actually woman teachers - believe obediently, not noticed, that they changed in the meantime into the medium. The instrumentalisation was rooted in the rhetoric of universalism and general moral obligations. Low financial compensation and sinking social status have caused that - men – teachers disappeared from this occupation, the new ones do not come because of the lack of attractivity and low wages - this branch is more and more feminised. It is a vicious circle, the cause and the effect change. Cermakova says, " that in all social and economic structures, where in the course of the socialist development women succeeded and took quantitatively higher part, it led to a gradual levelling, to the prestige loss, to the social case (administrative one, public education, health service). The effects were structural, political and in each case systematic. Women were here manipulation objects and not the subjects. Women were not regarded as a fully effective labour power in the comparison with the man and not only because of the motherly and family burden. But the woman is always latently underestimated. " (9, p 11).

This trend continues however to exist, also after the transformation of the society into the market mechanism. Reasons of that are the mentioned "system causes", the fact that the woman is perceived as not "fully effective labour power", on account of the most diverse reasons, whether only because that they must fulfil their motherly duties or it is thought in such a way that the woman, too, who is single, will get married once and will have children. Due to the work division between the sexes the women associate themselves in general with the not-paid work in their household. Just in this accepted association one can see the roots of the widened status also in our case.
And again we must ask: is it completely coincidental that in the public education a female dominance prevails, which is connected in regard with the contents rather with services and therefore with "care in extended meaning"? Misunderstanding or consequence of the instrumentalisation?

One must mention however as the same seriousness the covered form of the instrumentalisation and that many women themselves accept their own discrimination. During the lengthy process of the adjustment to patriarchal rule they have not noticed and have not reflected that they became a medium, or objects. They often satisfy themselves, if already nothing else, with the role of the helpers, protectors, wardresses... Therefore – to help, "prepared to help " - sounds magnificent! Mainly, when nearby there is the real subject - he! Why has not this subject become - she? This type of the question is not asked in Slovakia and not explicitly formulated. And in such a way "the female fate", "the natural vocation and duty of the woman", "its typical characteristics " etc. are continued to be spoken in this region. Without the feministic theories these problems will not be formulated and brought up for discussion in a different way.

Although everyone would probably agree with this thesis that one can speak about the subject, its self-authorisation only if one has the possibility (chance) and does want to participate, where it is decided. It is decided on him, on her, on the life quality, on what will happen, on completely concrete luck. Therefore private things in the public sphere, in politics are today decided. In the time of the society transformation it is very clearly shown, what the feminists in the West formulated and established already long ago: "privacy is political ".

In the conclusion we can say: What complicates woman’s life more, is not so much the mismatch of two different worlds, but rather the hierarchical relationship between them. Values in the public sphere are more emphasised and estimated. This means simultaneously the lack of acknowledgement and depreciation of such activities and values, which are created in the private sphere and it concerns rather the reproduction processes or the care activities in the broadest meaning of the word.

What is there behind? Concealed, as said with the words of I. Mozny, not articulated structural patriarchate (13). The feminisation of some areas has not been regarded at all until today among the women in Slovakia in connection with the male rule.

**Literature**