

## MEN AND WOMEN—A MERE PROBLEM OF PINK AND BLUE?

### THE FORMATION OF THE SUBJECT WE ARE. CAPITALISM, SOCIAL RELATIONS AND DAILY LIFE<sup>1</sup>

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS WORK IS TO RESTORE THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ANALYSIS OF MALE AND FEMALE ROLES FROM A STRUCTURAL PERSPECTIVE, ASSUMING THESE ROLES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC FORMATION THAT BRINGS THEM ABOUT. THIS ALLOWS US TO DECODE THE FINE ENGINEERING INVOLVED IN THE MALE AND FEMALE ASSIGNED-ASSUMED ROLES IN THE LOGIC OF CAPITAL WHICH, IN TURN, SUBSUMES THE PATRIARCHY LOGIC. THE "EFFICIENT WORKING MAN" AND THE "HOUSEWIFE WOMAN" ROLES ARE PRESENTED AS PARADIGMATIC EXAMPLES, AS WELL AS CERTAIN VICISSITUDES IN THEIR CHANGES. AS A STARTING POINT, WE DO NOT ASSUME THAT PERSONS OR THINGS INCORPORATE QUALITIES JUST FOR BEING WITHIN THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM, BUT THAT THE CAPITALIST RELATIONSHIP EXISTS BECAUSE IT IS MEDIATED BY CAPITALIST PERSONS AND THINGS. THEREFORE, IT WOULD BE NECESSARY TO DETERMINE THE PROCESS GENERATING REALITY AND INDIVIDUALS CLOSELY RELATED TO IT AND CAPABLE OF REPRODUCING A GIVEN ORDER, THUS UNDERSTANDING HOW "CAPITALIST MEN AND WOMEN ARE CREATED." DAILY LIFE IS PRESENTED AS THE IDEAL SCENARIO TO DETERMINE THE FATE OF THE SUBJECTS' NEEDS IN CONFORMITY WITH THIS GIVEN ORDER. THE ROLE PLAYED BY SOCIAL IMAGINARY FORMATION IN THE SOCIETAL INSTITUTION IS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION SINCE IT IS NOT ONLY AN ECONOMIC PRODUCTION MODE, BUT ALSO A SOCIAL PRODUCTION MODE. DETAILS ARE PROVIDED ON THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF FALSE ASSUMPTIONS, INTERESTING EXPLANATORY DIAGRAMS RESULTING FROM THE AMPLE WORKING EXPERIENCE SINCE THE INCEPTION OF THIS ProCC (COMMUNITY CORRECTING PROCESSES) METHODOLOGY.

KEY WORDS: GENDER, HEGEMONIC LOGIC, SOCIAL IMAGINARY, DAILY LIFE, FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

## INTRODUCTION

When making a historical and social approach to the production of our existence, it is crucial to define the analysis unit we use. The liberal stance adopts the individual as the analysis unit [...]. But, since our production is not only a physical production, but also an emotional and symbolic one, and since our life relations precede and remain even after our death, we can consider that the minimum unit is that set of relations, «the society». In this case, each human being would be the product of a certain social order, speaking a received language, wishing what, under certain circumstances, becomes desirable, behaving in accordance with the place he/she is assigned to, and could no longer considered as the basic unit of society.

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M. J. Izquierdo: El malestar de la desigualdad (1).

We believe it is important to deal with male and female roles<sup>2</sup> from a structural concept, understanding the construction of both roles in accordance with the economic and social formation that brings them about. This allows us to decode the fine engineering involved in the male and female assigned-assumed roles in the logic of capital, taking as a paradigmatic example what we call the "efficient working man" and the "housewife woman" roles.

As a starting point, we do not assume that persons or things incorporate qualities just for being within the capitalist system, but that the capitalist relationship exists because it is mediated by capitalist persons and things. Therefore, the capitalists' mythicized consciousness is a premise for the capitalist economy to function.

C. Castoriadis warns that, when Marx refers to the relationship mediated by things between persons, we must not understand these relations as something "external" or added to persons and things, defined aside from their insertion in this kind of relationship (2).

Then, we must determine the process generating reality and individuals closely related to it and capable of reproducing a given order. The relationship between an economic and social formation and the subjective evolution is essential. We must understand how the "capitalist men and women are created." We must identify our daily behaviors so as not to strive for autonomy, while reproducing dependence in our daily lives.

Understanding the role played by social imaginary formation in the societal institution is very useful, since it is not only an economic production mode, but also a social production mode.

What institutes, materializes and makes a society possible is determined by the structure of material relations, together with the production of universes of meanings stating that "things are as they are." (For example, a ten-euro bill is a real object issued by the State and having a symbolic character, since it represents a purchasing power and this entails an imaginary level. We must get involved in this imaginary level to provide that "real" with a particular entity; otherwise, it would be just a piece of paper.) Thus, we can regulate people's behavior based on the articulation of a universe of social imaginary meanings acting as sense flows.

The family institution is a privileged setting to gradually discipline these behaviors.

Therefore, what a society always establishes as real entails an imaginary load. What is assumed as social reality ("businessmen creates jobs," "the poor always existed," "this is natural in women," "men are selfish by nature,"...) involves a socially ingrained and collective interpretation of subjectivities.

In this regard, Castoriadis says that "when Marx states that 'a machine in itself is not more capital than gold in itself as currency,' here what he refers to as the fetish nature of goods, that what he thought of without naming it, is what we call the social imaginary meanings," adding that "for gold to become currency, it is necessary to have a historical and social development which, from the embryonic forms of exchange, leads to a general equivalent institution" (3). Since its inception, capitalism is closely associated with changes in individuals, things, social relations and institutions.

Then, society tries to establish dominant interpretations ingrained in subjectivities in an attempt to bring any questioning to a close, since this entails the risk of questioning the basis of its identity. This institution of meanings sets forth the conditions of what is

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feasible and keeps society united at the collective subjectivity level. Hence, every social and economic formation "secures" its order.

But it should also be said that society is intrinsically history and that new instituting processes can arise against what has been instituted.

In this regard, we want to restore daily life as a privileged place for intervening in these processes. Its study, despite being considered with a certain disdain as merely empiric, is indispensable if we want to understand the relationship between the economic and social world and human life. Daily life is the ideal space to observe:

- how a given social and economic formation materializes;
- how subjects are instituted in conformity with a given order;
- how resulting discomforts are hidden, thus attributing them a normal status and setting them aside as a mere complaint without any analysis or consequence, thus creating a state of generalized conformism.

According to Enrique Pichon Rivière, social psychology involves the criticism of daily life. As A. Pampliega de Quiroga and J. Racedo state, it deals with "the analysis of the destination of men's needs within a certain social and economic formation" (4). According to these authors, it allows to study the logic articulating sociability, the system of meanings and mechanisms with which the social system produces the ideological subjects required for its continuity and development. A better understanding of the logic articulating daily life, sociability and system of meanings will provide us with a greater knowledge of the social configuration of subjects in order to treat them under their concrete conditions of existence.

Capitalist exploitation has changed the strategies of previous centuries by an increasingly generalized alienation strategy masking the daily exploitation consciousness through the structuring and programming of daily life. Therefore, the design of an everyday intervention level is more indispensable than ever.

Likewise, the study of group processes is essential too, since it constitutes the genesis and neo-genesis place of subjects.

According to the prevailing ideology, they are the missing link and, together with the institutional level, make up the mediation spaces between the social and economic formation and subjectivity.

#### BEYOND PINK AND BLUE: THE FALSE ASSUMPTIONS

A long and ample experience supports the abovementioned statements in an attempt to understand the subject we are, what is involved in being entirely capitalist men and women, and also to understand the transformation possibilities, since we recognize the instituting capacity. Thus, since the 1980s, the Community Correcting Processes (ProCC, for its acronym in Spanish) methodology has been dealing with problems associated with male and female roles with the implementation of several ProCC programs: "Women and their current problems," "The male role: a silenced problem," "School for parents," "Men-women: understandings and misunderstandings," "Adolescence: its current problems"...

Based on that experience, we have been able to conceptualize the False Assumptions, an interesting explanatory diagram which, in any case, attempts to curtail the significance of this issue.

Why its name? Because as objectification of social imaginary meanings, they are real, though "false" when considering the social construction which is intrinsically a historical one and, therefore, subjected to the action of new instituting processes.

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Why do we speak about advantage and disadvantage as a starting point? Because, based on the social imaginary meanings imposed to the roles characterizing the capitalist hegemonic construction which incorporates the patriarchal postulates to its purpose, we observe that women assume the disadvantage role, while men assume the advantage one. Therefore, we focus on these concepts ("advantage"- "disadvantage"-A/D) as an explanatory tool.<sup>3</sup>

Following, we develop the basic hypothesis of False Assumptions, and then we present a diagram.

With the emergence of the bourgeoisie and in the wake of capitalist construction, the "free" man, deprived from his land, community bonds and working tools, was forced to sell his labor force to the market and becoming himself a merchandise<sup>4</sup> in the process.

He is also at the mercy of new social imaginary meanings, articulators of a subjectivity that will enable the construction and reproduction of the new order in the making: those proposed by the methodological individualism and those proposed by the logic of capital which demands the "man-worker," an alienated "human being" who becomes "a hired worker." As we said before, "the capitalist relationship exists because it is mediated by capitalist persons and things."

Likewise, it was necessary for that "efficient man-worker" to spend the breadcrumbs he gained as a wage, which had nothing to do with the product of his work, so that he could return "clean and dined" to the market. However, the overtiredness and the alienation of the working day lead this man to "squander" his wage buying beer, another dangerous situation since, when being together, men can nurture the germs of rebellion. This man should go from home to work and from work to home. But how would this be achieved? It was necessary to find a solution. Hence the creation of the "housewife" who, like a policeman interfering in "the privacy" of an inmate, will know how to administer "that pay envelope" so that her supporting man could go decently clean and dined to sell himself and, at the same time, to train the "future hired workers," their children.

This blatant material reality which, according to Marx, constitutes today "the civilized terror,"<sup>5</sup> required to be supported by social imaginary meanings<sup>6</sup> stating that things are as they are, and attributing an entity to the real so as to eliminate the institutional roles of men and women. It was then required to:

- create the real "other half" model to sweeten this reality of two at the service of capital reproduction;
- to establish a superiority and inferiority place to keep them united in a conflict plagued with a dependence which was, in turn, assigned to both;
- create an awareness of the need of this dependence: she will administer an envelope "she does not earn" (invisible work) and he will earn an envelope he should not administer daily; she will need a man to support her and he will need a woman who can "take care of him" and articulate his daily life; she will take care of their home (it will be her domain and she will be its Queen) and he will live in the labor world to be a good provider; she will be in the private setting and he in the public setting...)

This dependence, in turn, should be associated with an emulating narcissism in their self-esteem. That is, "she is a good woman because she is decent, clean, hardworking, of a good family, religious, submissive, discreet, homely, a mother that will do anything for her children"; "he is a good man because he is hardworking, has no vices, and some experience." It was necessary to hide the alienation and generate resignation by turning these relations into something natural.<sup>7</sup>

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The remaining forms of human wealth will be subordinated as merchandises.

That is the way in which we have articulated the so-called Filial-Parental-Model represented with two chairs tied together by their backs and in balance so that if one moves, the whole structure will fall down. The one representing the woman has a weight/burden; the chair representing the man has no weight/burden. However, this structure, hard to assemble, solidified for years due to a blood pact and the resignation of being autonomous humans, true political citizens.

The woman's "chair": the woman's weight/burden, as we pointed out, is visible. The disadvantage place assigned to inferiority is compensated by a power (turning her house into her domain; her children, her private property; and the man, her possession), which does not mean she will share household chores, will take care of children and share life with a man. Of course, this power, which grants her many secondary benefits against the man's domination (being the boss in many situations, knowing how to handle things to succeed in the end...), also constitutes a weight/burden and she can complain.

There are many possibilities to escape from this situation, though it still has a strong hegemonic component, namely:

- To escape from the vicious circle in which she complains of the weight/burden as a symptom, though assuming it as natural without questioning the False Assumption.
- To propose a change that is often focused on doing what she envied in man, assuming his role as a model (which is also subjected to the logic of the capitalist sociability). Economic independence is rescued but without questioning the need to become the protagonist in social construction. She looks for an equality based on competition and rivalry denying the differences. This does not mean the exclusion of the transitional value of countless achievements in the liberation process of women; this states the need to measure them from the recovery of expropriated places which, in many cases, are not questioned.
- To see with satisfaction the progress based on their joint involvement in hired labor, household tasks and care, the woman's self-sufficiency... but without associating the capitalist labor proposal with patriarchy and equality in differences.

As regards to these forms of escaping woman's problems, it is necessary to seek an explanation in the False Assumption itself facilitating the recovery of expropriations based on the instituting capacity perspective. This should never be a biased reading, so it is necessary to analyze, at the same time, the False Assumptions of both women and men. Otherwise, despite changes, their foundations will increase and consolidate in a new dimension, thus increasing resentment towards man since, from what was assigned, her problems are silenced and only privileges are visible, thus intensifying woman's pain. Understanding the False Assumptions will make alternative construction possible; and, though questioning the pillars supporting identity is expensive and generates resistance, their critical reading will allow us to find the defenses constructed from what has been instituted.

And, what happens with the man's "chair," the chair with no weight/burden? Has it no weight/burden at all or has it become invisible to keep man and woman trapped in the domination system, where one dominates and the other is dominated, thus fading<sup>8</sup> the struggle and blurring their domination over the logic of capital?

Man is acknowledged for his superiority, but with the paradox of achieving everything he wants "because he is a man," he is also expropriated from:

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- the capacity to learn ("even his value is assumed");
- the capacity to articulate everyday activities;
- the capacity to be connected with subjectivity (to show affection, to express his feelings);
- paternity;
- the body (alienation and dissociation): always at risk;
- a healthy sexuality.

Then, he becomes what we call a Superman with mud feet.

To compensate the alienation degree of being a man=worker=merchandise, complying with the capitalist purposes (and, consequently, with its patriarchal inheritance), he is granted privileges which place him in a situation of power over women. But his insertion in the labor market with his assigned role as family provider represents a heavy burden and deterioration. In this situation, man cannot complain for his assigned role of "being strong" and his guilt for such privileges. This will lay the foundations for silenced problems.

The greatest perversion lying behind man's problems is his objectification as "a worker-merchandise," which is as tight as a nut in the gear assembly of capitalism, thus implying a shut mouth. Thus, the silenced problems of a man at risk. Izquierdo, following Marx, states:

Under capitalism, the worker is no longer a working human being, but labor force-merchandise having an abstract working capacity. The "needed labor»" of the "labor force" is the socially needed abstract work that will allow the "labor force" to exist as labor force, not as a human being. We cannot speak about workers, much less about working human beings, but about abstract working capacity, making an abstraction of the worker to whom it belongs and of the family conditions under which it was produced [10].

There are many possibilities to escape from this situation, though they still have a strong hegemonic component, namely:

- To remain silent without questioning the False Assumption. To seek refuge in a bar, thus increasing his exclusion from the domestic setting.<sup>9</sup>
- To assume a change proposal in which he rather than claiming, he feels forced to do what the woman demanded from him, thus assuming new responsibilities without a critical interpretation of his problems and, therefore, leading him to other omnipotence levels.
- To consider that he has made progress in sharing the hired labor and the household tasks with the woman despite feeling confused and lost and remaining silent about his problems.

As regards to these escapes, like in the case of woman's False Assumption, it is necessary to develop the instituting capacity to recover what was expropriated.

When dealing with men's problems, women tend to reconsider their own problems with a greater impact, since when they become aware of man's silenced problems, they can no longer hope that their change will depend on "the help" of somebody to whom "nothing is happening" because "something is happening" and the problem is seen from a different perspective, without underestimating what remains to be tackled regarding the domination issue between them since, as we said, the False Assumption is real in terms of the materialization and objectification of a material domination reality. Likewise, men feel surprised and moved by the revelation of their silenced

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problems and, in many occasions, they refer that for the first time they have been able to dwell on something so relevant to them and still so hidden.

This possibility of unveiling the roles assigned to both generates a lot of power to the internal change they both have to achieve and, at the same time, promotes the development of solidarity bonds between men and women to wage a common struggle.

We believe that a reading of the assigned-assumed roles from a structural perspective is indispensable if we want to achieve revolutionary changes.

#### SUMMARY IN A BRIEF EXPLANATORY DIAGRAM

##### Woman's False Assumption (see Diagram 1)

Disadvantage. Inferiority situation with women's expropriations, commonly found in capitalist sociability.

Compensations. They include how, in order to achieve a certain degree of closure in the woman's instituted role, she is attributed a power centered in turning her home into a domain; her children, private property; and the man, her possession, instead of living in a house as a shared restricted place, raising her children and sharing life with a man.

Burden-complaint. Besides the secondary benefit of having power, the previous situation brings about burden and exhaustion in which women's complaint is legitimated as a very natural female attribute.

There are many possibilities to escape from this situation, though they still have a strong hegemonic component, namely:

- to escape from the vicious circle in which she complains of the burden as a symptom, though assuming it as natural without questioning the False Assumption;
- to propose a change focused on doing what she envied in men, assuming his role as a model (which is also subjected to the logic of the capitalist sociability);
- to see with satisfaction the progress based on their joint involvement in hired labor, household tasks and care, the woman's self-sufficiency... but without associating the capitalist labor proposal and equality in difference.

As regards to these escapes to woman's problems, we considered the need to question the False Assumption itself and recover expropriations developing the instituting capacity.

##### Man's False Assumption (see Diagram 2)

Advantage. Superiority situation with expropriations made to men which are common in capitalist sociability (first part of the explanatory diagram).

The paradox of placing men in the "can-do-anything" place while these expropriations take place, shapes what we call a Superman with mud feet.

Compensations. To compensate the alienation degree of being a man=worker=merchandise in correspondence with capitalist purposes, men are provided with privileges placing them in a situation of power over women.

Burden-complaint. His insertion in the labor market with the assigned role of family provider constitutes a heavy burden and deterioration. In this situation men cannot complain due to his assigned role of "being strong" and the guilt for his privileges. This will lay the foundations for silenced problems.

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There are many possibilities to escape from this situation, though they still have a strong hegemonic component, namely:

- To remain silent without questioning the False Assumption.
- To assume a change proposal in which he rather than claiming, he feels forced to do what the woman demanded from him, thus assuming new responsibilities without a critical interpretation of his problems and, therefore, plunging him into other omnipotence levels.
- To consider that he has made progress in sharing the hired labor and the household tasks with the woman despite feeling confused and lost and remaining silent about his problems.

As regards to these escapes, like in the case of woman's False Assumption, it is necessary to develop the instituting capacity to recover what was expropriated.

#### DIAGRAM OF FILIAL-PARENTAL MODEL AND PARTIAL CHANGE, AND SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF POST-MODERN PROFILES

Reintroducing the False Assumption again, we can see different linking articulations making up the relationship "models."

We are speaking of models though far from a reductionist attempt to enclose reality in a certain ideal theoretical construct. According to Castoriadis, there is no individual who, in order to be a social individual, must represent the whole societal institution, nor he would be able to do it. He does not represent the mean, and can be the effective equivalent in a compatible, coherent, convergent, even conflicting, fashion. (12).

Thus, the Population Diagnostic Indicators (IDP, for its acronym in Spanish), allowing us to articulate these models, do not represent the "mean" of a certain imaginary meaning. For example, the role of being an "indispensable woman" does not represent the capacity mean of indispensability found as a "mandate" present in the social imaginary. Therefore, together with that which is commonly asked for in the case of a woman (as, for example, "the salt is missing on the table"), every woman can assume this indispensability in a "compatible, coherent, convergent, even conflicting, fashion." Likewise, this allows us to assume the behavioral complexity expressed in daily life and preventing, as we already pointed out, reductionist tendencies.

Then, the IDPs are the characterization and systematization of small pieces of the social imaginary, crystallized in the everyday concrete behaviors; they involve the analysis and interpretation of reality indicators from a theoretical benchmark, thus allowing its categorization; they indicate the mechanism of the micro-processes within the non-visibility; they express a diagnostic value associated with the alleged health normality; and they contain a prognosis value concerning the feasibility of changes, of crucial importance when designing intervention strategies.

In turn, they are subjected to a constant process of ratification/rectification.

Based on this concept, we present the filial-parental and the partial change models, as well as some characteristics of post-modern profiles.

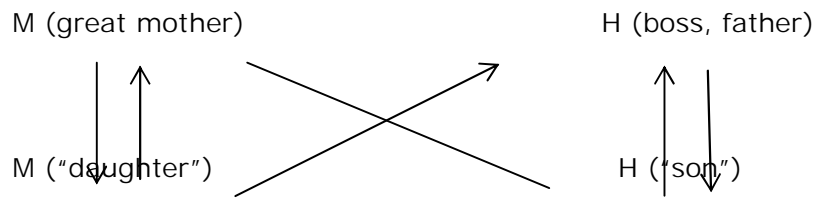
#### THE FILIAL-PARENTAL MODEL

This model includes nuclear aspects which are functional to the emergence and development of the logic of capitalism and the incorporation of patriarchal postulates. The role of both men and women are symbolically represented as blades because they cut across in a game in which women are on top (left blade) and men are on the bottom (right blade). She takes care of the man and children ("my husband is just another child"). Then, the man is on top and the woman is on the bottom (left blade):

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he is the boss of the family, support and provider, and she is now in a submissive and dependent situation ("from obedience to her father to obedience to her husband"). This is an articulated model that, taking the "my-other-half" metaphor, implies the complementariness of a game of mutual dependences.



The man depends on someone else to take care of him and for him to become an efficient worker; the woman depends on someone else to take care of her and for her to comply with her household tasks and care (invisible work). The system needs them to be needed. They are willing to pay very high prices for the benefit of "being together." They develop a gloomy sexuality, stolen from time and sin. The woman focuses on her children, her home, her household tasks; the man focuses on his work. She complains, but she feels comfortable in her place. He remains silent with a false awareness of comfort.

#### THE PARTIAL CHANGE MODEL

This model stems from women's struggles to escape from oppression and dependence. Transcendental achievements are recorded in social transformations, but we should ask ourselves: What kind of equality are we talking about? Is it within or outside the logic of capital? Are we respecting or denying differences? Looking for complementariness or increasing competition and rivalry? Understanding the silenced problems of man or maintaining the False Assumption of his advantage?

Based on these struggles, the partial change represents an attempt to become a "whole" by the woman, but/and with the eyes set on the alleged advantages of the man. The woman claims for help, she complains a lot about her tasks; she works inside and outside her home, she is overburdened. The man claims nothing; on the contrary, he feels he is being demanded something that women always used to reproach men, he is confused in his search for his place. On many occasions he will act as "mother of his children," as a "woman" at home. Both feel exhausted and confused, many times assuming rivalry positions. There is a new place for the children, raising *laissez-faire* and pseudo-autonomy guidelines.

#### CURRENT INDICATORS WHICH ARE NOT YET A MODEL

These two models respond to the socio-historical hegemony and represent linking games based on the assigned-assumed roles. Together with this, and based on the characteristics of hegemonic neoliberalism, we can now observe important indicators not having yet the nuclear element of a model, though its incidence level is becoming more significant. We can speak about a "functional couple," light links with the prevalence of uncommitment, without a project, self-sufficient woman, lost men, "sex solidarity" (boy with boy and girl with girl), denial of children, late adoptions...

#### THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES

As produced but also producer subjects with instituting capacity, we asked the following questions: how can we transform ourselves and transform society being completely capitalist men and women, constructed with the logic of capital or with certain experience of interrupting this logic?

We start by considering that instituted consensus does not vanish easily and perpetuates its effects despite changes in the social and material conditions. Freeing

ourselves from the instituted aspects which form part of ourselves implies, therefore, to promote, within social intervention, specific and purposive actions since, allegedly, we are working with issues affecting us (for example, we can work on the basis of a participatory methodology but, if the acknowledging and working conditions of our learned authoritarian attitudes are not present, our knowledge will be inconsequential).

According to Brown, this demands “the need to lay the foundations for a praxis linking micro- and macrosocial contexts and transforming the internal and external reality on equal basis” (13).

In this case, we are dealing with an important pending issue within the framework of the political and social intervention associated with the way in which—when it is not set aside as a minor problem or depending on the responsibility of everyone with life—the issue of subjectivity at risk constructed with the same categories of that it intends to transform is neglected.

If social and political changes do not go hand in hand with the liberation of the individual’s psyche, if we bet for the social by denying the subjectivity, any construction will be authoritarian.

We consider that an adequate and specific group methodology is essential to approach daily discomforts and, therefore, we propose the ProCC methodology and the Formative Groups Method. Based on this proposal, without getting into therapeutical issues, we propose to have a bearing on the process of generating an independence from the instituted social imaginary; that is, to develop a reflexive capacity entailing the capacity to question “beyond what is allowed by the unhealthy established hegemonic order.”

We believe this is a necessary, though not sufficient, condition to become autonomous subjects, the protagonists of social/personal acting.

DIAGRAM 1

Social and historical construction of male and female roles

False Assumptions  
MIRTHA CUCCO (1980)

WOMAN’S FALSE  
ASSUMPTION

DISADVANTAGE

ADVANTAGE

BINARY LOGIC

INFERRIORITY

EXPROPRIATIONS

Understanding that being a woman is very beautiful.

Capacity to appraise her

COMPENSATIONS

HOUSE=DOMAIN instead of taking care of a house, a restriction place.

CHILDREN=PRIVATE →

“TIRESOME” WOMAN. Complains about the burden she has without questioning the False Assumption. Vicious circle because losing “Burden” entails losing Power.

“MODERN” WOMAN. The change is based on what she envies in men.

SELF-SUFFICIENT WOMAN. Confronting the difficulty of keeping household chores and a job, she assumes both or renounces to life with her couple or maternity, giving priority to an alleged “individual development.” She feels self-sufficient. Light linkages prevail.

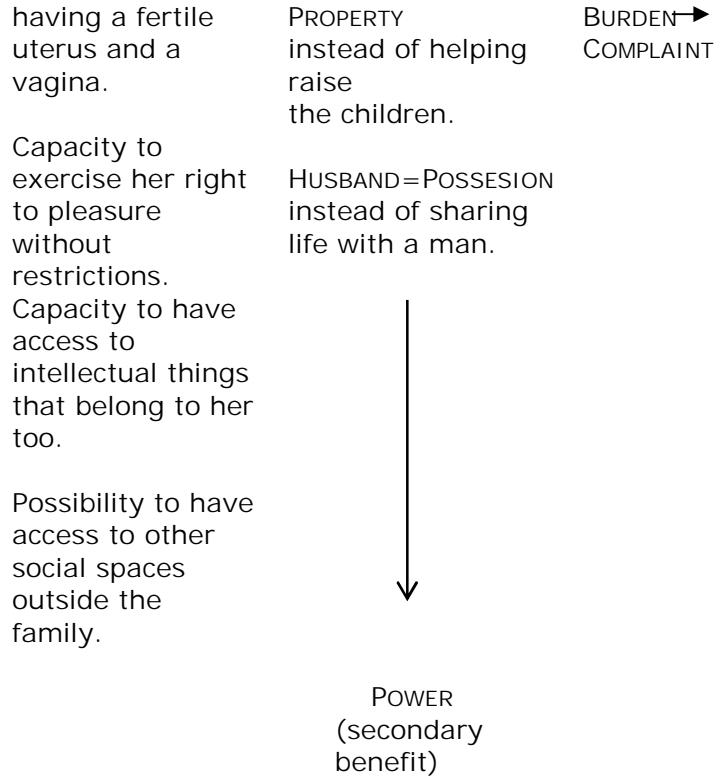


DIAGRAM 2

Social and historical construction of male and female roles

False Assumptions  
 MIRTHA CUCCO (1980)

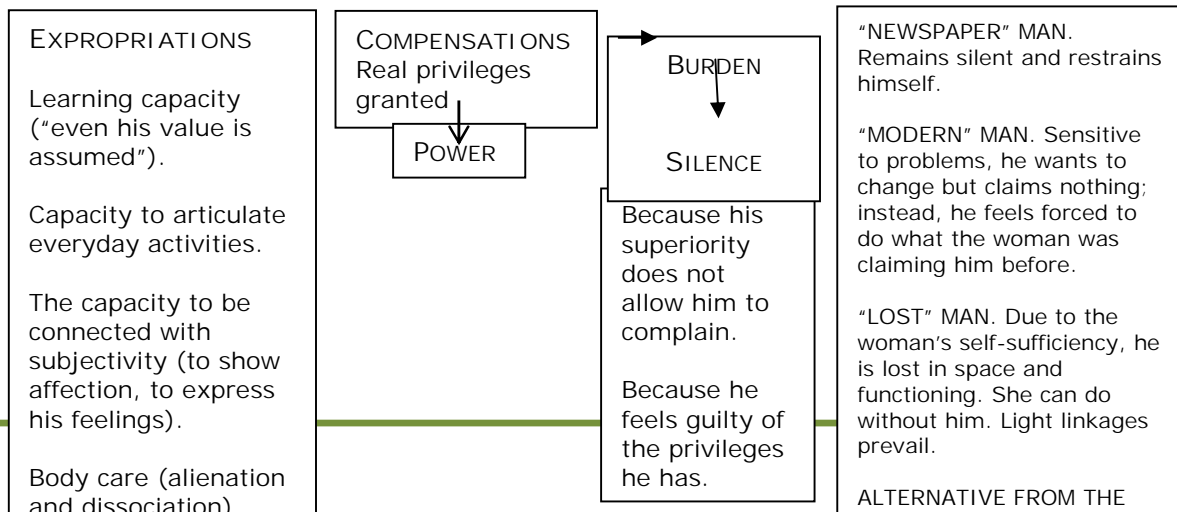
MAN'S FALSE  
 ASSUMPTION

DISADVANTAGE

ADVANTAGE

BINARY LOGIC

SUPERIORITY



## NOTES

1. Version revised and modified in 2013 by M. Cucco: Hombres y mujeres. ¿Solo un problema de rosa y azul? La formación del sujeto que somos. Capitalismo, relaciones sociales y vida cotidiana. Nuestra Ciencia. Revista del Colegio de Psicólogos de la Provincia de Córdoba-Argentina 2010; 14: 37-46. Available in: [www.procc.org](http://www.procc.org)

2. We speak about roles since the gender terminology, in our view, has been limited to visualizing women's problems.

3. See Chapter 2 ("La bella diferencia. La diferencia como problema") in *La mujer de la ilusión* by A. Fernández. Just to have an idea we include the following statement: "In the Epistêmê of the Same, the categories from where gender differences could be thought of are structured from an attributive, binary and hierarchical perspective. Attributive because it grants and attributes to the predicates of the male sex the property of the human model (Man=man). Therefore, the other gender is built in terms of negativity. Binary because it only alternates two truth values, one being necessarily true and the other one false (not A and B, but A and not -A). Hierarchical because it transforms one of the two terms in inferior, complement or supplement. In this logic, the different will be always negative in relation to what the hegemonic indicates as the one and, therefore, false. The incomplete version of one and, therefore, inferior" (5).

4. Marx says: "The expelled people created by the breaking up of the bands of feudal retainers and by the forcible expropriation of their soil—this 'free as air' proletariat—could not possibly be absorbed by the nascent manufactures as fast as it was thrown upon the world. On the other hand, these men, suddenly dragged from their wonted mode of life, could not as suddenly adapt themselves to the discipline of their new condition. They were turned en masse into beggars, robbers, vagabonds, partly from inclination, in most cases from stress of circumstances. Hence at the end of the 15th and during the whole of the 16th century, throughout Western Europe a bloody legislation against vagabondage proliferated" (6).

5. "Marx documents these statements: he refers, for example, to a 1547 statute passed during the reign of Edward VI ordaining that if anyone refuses to work, he shall be condemned as a slave to the person who has denounced him as an idler. The sole obligation of his master is to feed him. If he escapes, he is condemned to slavery for life and is to be branded on forehead with the letter S. If he escapes again he is to be executed. This kind of law was in effect until early in the 18th century. Regarding the situation in France, under the reign of Louis XVI, an ordinance stated that every man in good health from 16 to 60 years of age, if without means of subsistence and not practicing a trade, was to be sent to the galleys. We must remember that, in Spain, the vagrancy and criminal law was in effect until the end of Franco's regime" (7).

6. "What is feminine? What is masculine? In keeping with their own 'needs,' each epoch defines what it suits them for each sex, based on an illusory place of spontaneity and without temporality. The social imaginary organizes the illusory order for each sex, thus instituting the masculine and feminine genders. This illusion is so powerful that it not only consolidates public and private practices of concrete individuals, but also generates much of the subjective and material processes of society" (8).

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7. TODOS LOS DÍAS

Salgo a la calle, corriente, soy otra rueda de esta máquina infernal, que nos fabrica la rutina... llego a la esquina, como una boca el colectivo me devora... angustia me mastica media hora y me tira en la oficina. discutimos, Ya ni soy nadie, sólo una cifra de una gran calculadora... como otra cosa, entre las cosas de esta máquina espantosa. La tardecita, me toca el gong... para salvarme del knockout compás de la paliza del laburo salgo tan grogui... como la gente	que camina en la  sin ideas en la mente, consumido... sin apuro. Y al fin te encuentro descargo en vos la  acumulada adentro... Todos los días  nos unimos... nos comprendemos, de hacer lo mismo. La vida pasa, pasan los días, sin cambiar en nada el ritmo... Sólo el silencio de un  con la esperanza... que por lo menos salga el sol este domingo.
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HOMERO AND VIRGILIO EXPÓSITO

8. We believe that Marx's statement is eloquent enough to show the true reasons for silencing the masculine problems: "The former money holder opens the march as capitalist; the labor force owner follows him as his worker; the first smiles, significantly, giving himself airs, and impetuously advances; the second does it with reluctance and distrust, as the one who has taken his own flesh to the market and can only expect one thing: to be tanned" (9).

9. According to Izquierdo, being the provider implies that, when he arrives late from work, he will not feel like playing with his children, or talk with his wife, because the provider is subjected to pressures and violence affecting his behavior at home. Being the housewife implies bearing the burden of educating her children and ensuring that money will last till the end of the month. Given the system in which she lives, we cannot expect for a housewife to be sensitive to the situation of «workers», when her children are demanding her attention and her husband wants to see something on his plate when coming back home. When, despite his tiredness and discomfort, the provider behaves as a father is because he has managed to overcome this circumstances, like when the housewife, despite the social autism derived from her being holed-up, shows a political commitment and supports her husband when he goes on strike. In both cases, the subject has overcome the conditions prevailing in patriarchy in the relations between the provider and the housewife (11).

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