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IN BED WITH PROCRUSTES

Feminism's Flirtation with Patriarchy

BOOK 2

THE HESTIA TRILOGY



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INTRODUCTION

This volume, the second in the "Hestia trilogy," builds on ten very general principles of Hestian Feminism laid out in the Epilogue of *The Accidental Theorist*. Let me summarize the principles which serve as the foundation for a Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems approach to social, political, and economic change:

Ten Principles of Hestian Feminism

- Hestian Feminism takes the household/family ecosystem as its problematic, i.e., the subject of its inquiry. It is feminist because it takes the concerns of women in both private/public life seriously. These concerns are primary, not secondary; they are central, not marginal.
- Hestian Feminism regards the *oikos*-centered Household and the *polis*-centered State as dual systems distinguished by their goals, structures, and functions. They are characterized as the hestian/hermean and support complementary, not oppositional, subsystems of human action.
- The hestian/hérmean are open systems that interface and are maintained through transactions between them and among other macro- and micro-systems in the environment. These interactions can be identified as inputs, throughputs, and outputs organized to support each system's overarching goals, primarily the goals of sustenance and nurturance for the hestian domain and the goals of dominance and governance for the hermean domain. The throughputs, or processes, that occur within each domain and its subsystems support the larger system's overarching goals. Positive or negative feedback contributes to equilibrium/disequilibrium in and between systems operating in the dual domains of everyday life.
- The hestian/hermean systems support distinctive discourse territories: the hestian discourse of domesticity is outside the relations of ruling, i.e., extra-patriarchal, and the hermean discourse of domination is within it.
- The hermean discourse territory generates texts (such as laws, rules, regulations, treaties) that promote the relations of ruling, i.e., patriarchy. The conceptual practices of power are encoded in its discourse of domination.

- The extra-patriarchal hestian discourse territory generates texts (such as instructions, recipes, personal narratives, household (home management) "hints," human relations and development research, and nutrition, family and consumer studies, and the design of apparel and of the near environment. The discourse of domesticity promotes individual and family well-being and empowerment.
- Knowledge construction proceeds from either a hestian perspective or a hermean perspective.
- The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm provides a non-gendered approach to the perennial problems of everyday life related to the sustenance of the species and the nurturance of individual lives in domestic units (family ecosystems) as well as the organization of domestic units into complex communities or civic units. Systems theory provides a non-gendered language with which to identify, analyze, and propose solutions to problems related, on the one hand, to sustenance and nurturance and, on the other hand, to dominance and governance.
- The hestian/hermean systems have independent histories. They exist in a dynamic relation that can be conceptualized as a double helix.
- The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm is explanatory, descriptive, and predictive. The model is explanatory; it reveals relationships that are obscured in patriarchal discourse. The model is descriptive; it makes the invisible visible. It is predictive; it embeds the systems principle that a change in one part of the system will have a greater or lesser effect on other parts of the system(s). It provides a language in which explanations, descriptions, and predictions can remain consistent with each other and can be communicated across disciplinary boundaries.

The explanatory paradigms of patriarchy were not developed by women for women. Feminists challenge these paradigms on the basis of their gender bias. My claim is that, prior to gender, perspective is influenced by positionality in one, the other, or both of these systems of human action. Hestian/hermean principles apply to everyday familial and political life.

This volume compares the Household/Family with the patriarchal paradigm of the Government/State. Its intent is to test the application of the paradigm in several disciplines to see how the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm would play out in different experiential and academic do-

mains. The chapters trace the double helix of everyday life through a number of different settings in our experiential/conceptual world.

Plan of the Book

Part I of this volume, *Feminism and the Prism of Patriarchy*, follows the first volume of this trilogy to elaborate the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm as a feminist theory of "hearth and home." It claims the domestic domain, or *oikos*-system, as a legitimate site from which to develop feminist theory, moving from a "dual spheres," to a "dual systems" paradigm. The dual systems are identified as "hestian," named for Hestia, ancient Greek guardian of the hearth, hearthfire and, by extension, the "homeplace," and "hermean," named for Hermes, ancient Greek guardian of bridges and commerce and, by extension, the "marketplace" (*agora*). These terms are not mere neologisms for the "private" and the "public" but convey these aspects of everyday life as a "double helix" in which the two are not separate, but intertwined and interactive *autopoietic*, or self-organizing, systems.

The *Prologue* argues that for the homeplace to receive theoretical parity with the marketplace requires a change in worldview or a paradigm shift. A paradigm shift would include a "homeplace" as well as a "marketplace" standpoint.

Chapter 1, "Feminism: In Bed with Procrustes?" opens with the claim that feminists have too readily viewed women's lives through the prism of patriarchy and so fail to address the totality of everyday life that includes men as well as women. The charge of being "in bed with Procrustes" refers to mainstream feminism's readiness to accept, rather than to challenge, the patriarchal paradigms into which they try to fit feminist theory.

Chapter 2, "Feminism and Perspectivism," expands the concept of standpoint to suggest that human beings occupy spaces in two significant locations, the private *oikos*-system and the public *polis*-system. These dual standpoints influence women's and men's perspective on social reality.

Chapter 3, "A Hestian Feminist Systems Perspective," proposes that feminist theorists adopt the principles of general systems theory (GST) in order to address the complexity of issues that arise when both a gender and a hestian perspective are introduced to theoretical discourse.

Chapter 4, "The Hestian and the Hermean: The Double Helix of Everyday Life," asserts the importance of developing feminist theories of the house-

hold/family/home so that men and women involved in homeplace activities can be termed "hestian" rather than "feminine." By contrast, women who adopt "male roles" in government/state/marketplace activities can be called "hermean" rather than "masculine."

Chapter 5, "A Hestian Feminist Critique of 'Pure' Feminism," reviews several mainstream feminist positions (Liberal, Cultural/Material, Socialist, Marxist, and Radical (Lesbian) Feminism as well as Psychoanalytic Feminism and Ecofeminism). It examines them through hestian/hermean lenses. This critique focuses on the treatment of familial/political issues in masculist as well as feminist theories. It recognizes men as partners in matters related to "hearth and home." The challenge is to create a feminist theory that is more than a re-statement of patriarchal theory. It concludes that adopting the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm could bring the Household/Family/Home into theoretical parity with the Government/State/Marketplace.

Part II of this volume, "Theorizing Ourselves Out of Patriarchy," applies the lenses of the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm to re-view patriarchal paradigms in the disciplines. As they evolved out of the classics and Western philosophy, history, political science, sociology, psychology, economics, and science and technology promoted conceptual frameworks developed by self-defining, mutually reinforcing, and paradigm-perpetuating male thinkers. Depending on whether one's assumptions are grounded in the perspective of the hestian or the hermean domain, a different logic and rationality are generated. So, too, are different ethical arguments.

Chapter 6, "The Classics: Following 'Ariadne's Thread,'" offers some re-readings of classical sources through hestian/hermean lenses.

Chapter 7, "Hestia, Heraclitus, and Heidegger," addresses problems of ontology raised when Hestia is recognized as the "place of being," an etymologically appropriate strategy.

Chapter 8, "His-story Through a Hestian Lens: The Case of Home Economics" offers the history of the home economics movement as an exemplar of hestian history.

Chapter 9, "Domestic Science and Political Science: The 'Body Domestic' and the 'Body Politic,'" suggests how the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm can expand political theory and political philosophy to admit hestian concerns to hermean discourse.

Chapter 10, "The Hestian Family and the Hermean State: A Sociological Perspective," reflects on basic issues in sociological theory presented in

the early work of Ferdinand Tönnies. It further suggests that the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm can explain the social construction of invisibility.

Chapter 11, "The Hestian Archetype," offers a Hestian feminist reading of Jung to incorporate the hestian/hermean as extensions of the Jungian concepts of the *anima/animus*.

Chapter 12, "The Hestian Economy," examines historical concepts of "economics" to distinguish the invisible hestian economy of the homeplace from the visible hermean economy of the marketplace.

Chapter 13, "Hestian Science and Technology," proposes a Hestian feminist model of normative science as a complement to a positivist model of hermean science.

Chapter 14, "Ethics in the Hestian/Hermean Systems," extends the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm to examine ethical dilemmas confronted in the dual domains.

The *Epilogue* summarizes the author's intentions in this volume, the second in the "Hestia trilogy." It concludes with the hope that the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm can serve as a prolegomenon to a new humanism for the new millennium.

A Note on Interdisciplinarity

Musing on a "lost article" written by social psychologist Donald Campbell some thirty years ago, Thomas J. Scheff (1998) noted that Campbell (1969) had foreseen the increasing "hyper-specialization" that characterizes today's social science disciplines, sub-disciplines and "schools of thought." With exceptional prescience, Campbell predicted their increasing isolation and separation from each other, noting that most members of each group read the same journals, think similar thoughts, research similar topics, and use similar methodologies. He proposed a "fish scale" model of research in which the disciplinary "overlaps" of adjacent fields would be revealed. He further concluded that the organization of content into departments was highly arbitrary; indeed, it was due in large part to historical accident. In addition to "historical accident," I would claim that patriarchal paradigms have been largely resorted to as the "frame of reference," even in some feminist work, thus creating an academic "bed of Procrustes."

More recently, Becher & Trowler (2001) address "overlaps, boundaries, and specialisms" (2001, 58-74) to discuss the "common frontiers" shared

by academic disciplines. The Academy is subject to disciplinary “territoriality” that provokes its own “border wars” among the faculty. I argue that a precursor to examining such contentious and problematic “overlaps” is to discern from which perspective—the private/public, domestic/civic/ or familial/political—a phenomenon, a problem, a set of problems, or an issue is being addressed.

This volume offers the metaphors of the “double helix” (introduced in Book I of this trilogy) and adopts the language of General Systems Theory (GST) to re-think interdisciplinary issues. I propose that the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm be applied to reveal disciplinary “overlaps” and “frontiers” as interfaces and interconnections, as suggested by the Chapters in Part II of this volume.

*A political scientist, drawn to
the science of the political relationship
between the home Prologue and the state!
wow!*

Hestian Feminism: Re-framing the Household/State Relation

Reason has brought us more dread than ignorance did.

—Denise Levertov

When my contemporary, the American poet-activist Denise Levertov, died in 1997 at age 74, former U.S. poet laureate Robert Haas called her one of the defining poets of her generation. A national news magazine described her as someone who meditated on the politics of the household and the state. This might not seem a memorable achievement. Yet the observation struck me, a poet's daughter, with great force. I, too, have spent much of my professional and creative life (first as a student of political science and later as a "convert" to domestic science) pondering the Household/State relationship, a relationship central to what I call Hestian Feminism, a feminism of "hearth and home."

Blaise Pascal famously observed that "the heart has its reasons that reason knows not of." On a Hestian feminist reading, his words could be changed to state that "the *hearth* has its reasons...." Levertov's and Pascal's insights lead me to challenge masculinist concepts of rationality and to examine the age-old bifurcation of the Household/State in human life.

This volume continues the exploration, begun in Volume I, of the intellectual and emotional division of experience captured in the concept of the private/public which I characterize as "the double helix of everyday life." The two overriding institutions that operate in daily life are undoubtedly private domestic units (Households/Families) where people live as kin and public civic units (Governments/States) where people live as citizens. Little theoretical attention has been paid to the former while a great deal has been paid to the latter. I propose that the relationship be stated analogically: the Household is to the Government as the Family is to the State. I propose the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm as one way to describe and explain the private/public domains in human experience.

What Is "Feminist" about Feminist Theory?

My view of what it means to be a feminist theorist accords with what sociologist John Wilson (1993) says, namely, that "The object of feminist theory is to place women and their lives in a central place in understanding social relations as a whole (343)." Wilson further states that "Feminist theory rests its claim for attention on the significance of gender in social life (438)." He sees feminism as "a species of critical theory seeking to enable its subjects to see through appearances to understand the structure underlying and giving (distorted) meaning to their lives" (354).

Gender is the defining issue for most feminist theory, but, because it does not address the overlapping and intersecting tensions in the work and family lives of men, it may have become as limiting as it once was liberating for women. Although gender is the primary lens of feminist analysis, many arguments touch upon, make contact with, or trace their origin to, previous patriarchal paradigms. Sometimes they extend or expand, sometimes they reject, aspects of those original works. Without critical reflection or empirical evidence, can women assume that what is true from the perspective of male elites is also true from the perspective of "Others," women *and* men, in less privileged social locations?

In the first waves of feminism, women claimed "foremothers" who had the drive to contribute to social and intellectual life against overwhelming resistance on the part of men's collective misogyny articulated in the institution of patriarchy. In this work, patriarchy refers to the collective advantages and privileges that elite males enjoy at the expense of most women and many disadvantaged men. As noted by Andrea Nye (1988):

Theory has its origins in neither nature nor logic, but in the struggle to make sense of human action. The philosophies of men are theories of men's activities, activities which from the beginning exclude women; the goal of male theorizing is to rationalize the inconsistencies and destructiveness of these activities. Marked indelibly with this project, the philosophies of man cannot serve feminist purposes without compromise. (229)

I began my inquiry by questioning the foundation of "the philosophies of man." Once theorizing (*theorein*) was associated with contemplation of the hearthfire, the *hestia* of the ancient Greek *oikos* (household). Today, it is likely to be the contemplation of the ideas of patriarchal thinkers many

steps removed from everyday life, and most especially from the day-by-day lives of ordinary women.

As I revisited the separation of the ancient Greek *oikos* from the ancient Greek *polis* (city-state), I found these institutions identified with two mythic personae: Hestia was the guardian of the hearthfire (also called *hestia*) in the *oikos*.¹ The *oikos* provides a unique standpoint from which to visualize and theorize human experience from the perspective of the Household/Family. I call this homeplace standpoint "hestian." Hermes was the guardian at the door, at the threshold of the *oikos*, and the protector of bridges and of the *agora*, or marketplace, of the *polis*. The *polis* represents the public, civic realm of human experience. It provides a marketplace standpoint, biased in favor of the Government/State, which I call "hermean." For over three millennia, it has been masculist and androcentric.

In this trilogy, the adjectives "hestian" and "hermean" differentiate private *oikos*-centric standpoints and systems of action from public *polis*-centric standpoints and systems of action. These relationships were examined in the first volume of this trilogy and produced the "Table of Contrasts" that forms the infrastructure of Hestian feminist theory (see Figure 1).

FIGURE I

A Hestian/Hermean "Table of Contrasts"

Hestia/Hermes
oikos/polis
 hestian/hermean
 private/public
 domestic/civic
 sustenance/dominance
 nurturance/governance
oikos-system/polis-system
oikos-centric/polis-centric
 feminist/masculist
 familial/political
 homeplace/marketplace
 hestianeutic/hermeneutic

Feminist Theory: Going Beyond Gender

John C. McCullers (1987) says that theory serves as an aid to collecting, analyzing, and interpreting facts and shows us how to integrate facts "into the existing frameworks of knowledge" (531). I argue that the "existing frameworks of knowledge" are masculinist and patriarchal, and they lure women into the metaphorical "bed of Procrustes," i.e., the conceptual frameworks they take for granted in the disciplines. According to McCullers:

Formal logic provides a powerful conceptual aid to logical reasoning. Logic and mathematics magnify our natural reasoning abilities in much the same way as the telescope, for example, magnifies the ability of the naked eye. Just as we gain a better distant vision with a telescope at the price of our near vision, viewing the work through the special lenses of formal logic may make it more difficult to detect whatever nonlawful or random features there may be. (527)

However, logic and reason are only one model of human cognitive functioning. If logic is one mode, intuition is another. A scientist of the stature of Nobelist Barbara McClintock (whose words are quoted in the epigraph in Chapter 13) worked outside the paradigms of received genetic science when she discerned a different pattern, an alternative explanation, for genetic traits in corn.

The capacity to reason begins with the recognition of common features in phenomena. But what one person sees as an ascribed common feature, another may reject in favor of another that appears to her/him to be of greater significance and importance. What is an irrelevant detail in one paradigm's system of logic may be extremely important in another. I accept as a "given" that feminist theory can address conceptual relationships as well as personal and political relationships, a tendency I discern in Levertov's words of caution in the epigraph.

More than two decades ago, Jane Flax (1978) observed that:

The most important characteristic of theory is that it is a systematic, analytic approach to everyday experience. This everybody does unconsciously. To theorize, then, is to bring this unconscious process to a conscious level so it can be refined. All of us operate on theories, though most of them are implicit. We screen out certain things; we allow others to affect us; we make choices and we don't always understand why.

Theory...makes these choices conscious, and enables us to use them more efficiently. (21)

Because the "everyday experience" of women and men is different, their standpoints and responses to circumstances are also different. In fact, the *oikos* was outside the *polis*; the Household is outside the State. Flax recognized that:

the family is where we're internally formed, where we learn about gender, where we experience class and race systems in personal and intimate ways. Therefore, understanding the functions of the family should be one of the crucial goals of feminist theory; yet it remains an area that is particularly undeveloped. (Ibid., 23)

In the years since these words were written, not much has been published by feminist theorists that would warrant a change in Flax's observation. Content in the bed of Procrustes, feminists show little inclination to become informed about the work done in "traditional" women's fields that were historically involved in family matters. Will such fields as home economics, nursing, social work, early childhood education, and school guidance counseling—which I would call "hestian" professions—have to be retheorized or reinvented? In that case, precious time is being lost and intellectual energy is being dissipated by feminist theorists in bed with Procrustes.

A feminism that condones a "deficit model" of domesticity risks throwing the hard-won refinements of human behavior we term "civilized" out of the feminist window. Behaviors that harness aggression and reward civility require a different perspective on interpersonal relations. This involves reeducation and retraining so that "macho" values are not perpetuated or even exaggerated (as is the case with domestic violence) in response to women's increasing independence and autonomy.

Giving the Household/Family equal standing with the Government/State in our conceptual frameworks is different from arguing for sex or gender equality. Once we recognize that human beings of both sexes have roles and responsibilities in both systems of human action, we can theorize the effects of differential status and power in each domain.

Challenging Patriarchal Paradigms

Patriarchal paradigms routinely avoid discussion of Household/Family issues that concern women on a daily basis. Feminists must ask how they

The paradigm of dominance/subordination begun in ancient Greece persists in the conceptual world and the value system of patriarchy, and it is even extended to metaphors of domination over "Nature." As noted by Margery Cornwell (1997):

- (1) *Value-hierarchical thinking* gives higher status to what is Up (men) or is gender-identified with what is Up, such as reason, mind, aggression, control, culture, and production, than to what is Down (women) or gender-identified with what is Down, such as emotion, body, passivity, submissiveness, nature, and reproduction;
- (2) *Value dualisms* organize reality into oppositional and exclusive rather than complementary and inclusive pairs, and "either-or" ways of thinking, and
- (3) *Power-over conceptions* maintain relationships of domination and subordination. (237)

In combination, such concepts constitute the bed of Procrustes—the network of related concepts and ideas that support patriarchy.

The Equal Importance of Dual Standpoints

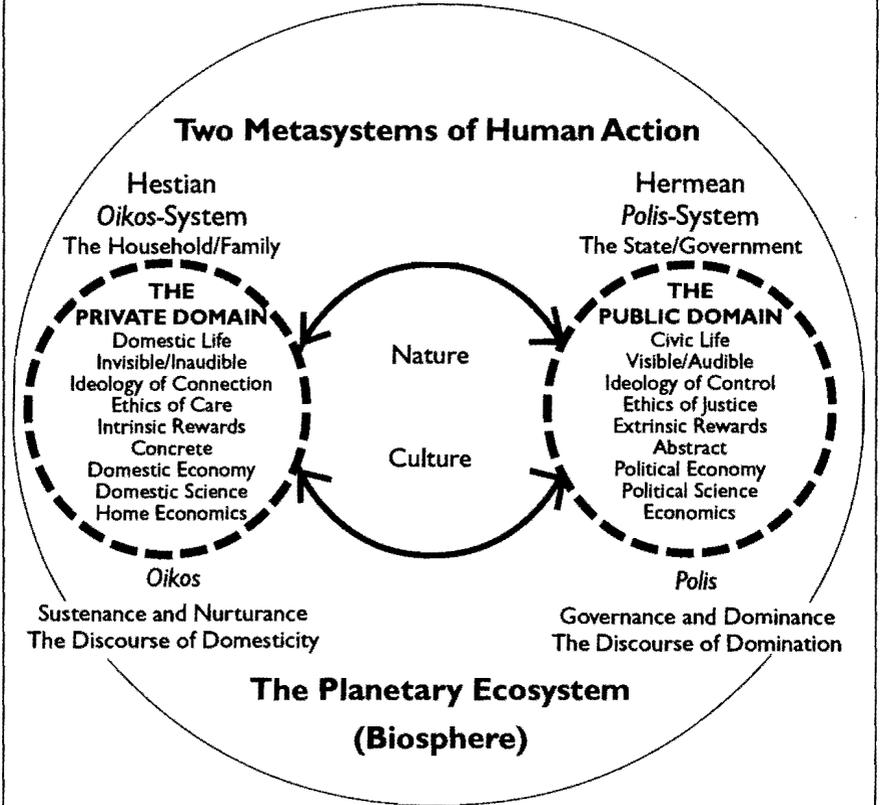
Once we accept the reality of dual systems and dual standpoints and recognize that they have existed (and continue to exist) independently of gender, we can identify them as the starting points, or *archae*, for two distinctive viewpoints grounded in two distinctive locations in the social world.

The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm permits a consistent comparison of behaviors and social phenomena in two separate social locations. One system of action—the hestian *oikos*-system—is organized around universal *oikos*-centric demands for sustenance and nurturance, that is, for meeting such basic human needs as for food, clothing, shelter, care of the young, sick, aged, and infirm, and the production, acquisition, and distribution of the human and material resources essential for meeting those needs. It involves systems of action organized to support the private domain of the household/family/home or "homeplace." These systems have affective and instrumental elements. The "Other" system of action—the hermean *polis*-system—is organized around *polis*-centric demands for dominance and governance essential for meeting the need for public order in the government/state/and "marketplace."

The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm opens the possibility that women and men can free themselves from rigidly boundaried gender

FIGURE 2

The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm



The elements of a system are a "bounded set" defined by unique relationships that join the elements in a shared purpose. In this case, the overarching purpose of the hestian system is sustenance and nurturance, and the overarching purpose of the hermean system is governance and dominance. The goals of the systems are supported by discourses, a discourse of domesticity in the private domain and a discourse of domination in the public domain. Each system supports subsystems such as economic systems and symbolic systems that meet each system's overarching goal. The family ecosystem is a subsystem of the hestian oikos-system.

frameworks—from the bed of Procrustes, so to speak. By proposing the “dual lenses” embedded in the paradigm (see Figure 2), it becomes possible for the “old feminism” to shift perspective and evolve into a “new humanism” in which Household/State, Family/Government, Homeplace/Marketplace relationships reflect women’s and men’s complex experiences in both the private/public domains.

Changing Paradigms: Re-framing the Disciplines

The canonical texts in philosophy and political theory were simply not written by women, for women, or to women. They are based on preexisting patriarchal paradigms. They were *polis*-centric and androcentric, rather than gynocentric and *oikos*-centric! It is reasonable to state that patriarchal descriptions of reality are not gender neutral, objective, or detached; they are unself-critically subjective and gender biased. The cumulative effect of patriarchal gender bias has been the development of a habit of mind that values “masculine” qualities and despises “feminine” qualities, even when exhibited by males!

Thelma McCormack believed it important to distinguish between the psychology of knowledge that reflected a male power structure that gives men an advantage in science and society and the logic of knowledge which she asserted was gender free (1981, 4). I would agree with the first part of her assessment but argue that it applies to other disciplines as well. Two decades ago, McCormack made a prophetic observation when she said:

Studies that nurse our grievances...can become counterproductiveWhat is needed, then, are studies which provide answers or partial answers to further questions of what equality means and whether it is a realistic vision or just another cargo cult belief, or a prophetic idea like the ‘withering away of the state’ that could come back to haunt us as a cruel human travesty of human freedom. (6)

In real life, we resist ideas that contradict our experience of the world. The great test of our rationality is our fortitude and open-mindedness and our flexibility and adaptability to changing conditions. This requires tolerance (for a time at least) of ambiguity and ambivalence. At base, we recognize two different human survival needs: for nurturance and for governance, that is, for creating order in the homeplace/marketplace in a world of contingency and uncertainty.

A Hestian Feminist Paradigm Shift

Human beings have changed their paradigms at critical turning points in the struggle to separate appearance from reality and fact from fiction. This inevitably involves a scholarly reassessment of previously neglected data. Once we discredit the assumptions on which a paradigm is based, we destabilize a host of related concepts. These cannot be successfully addressed on an ad hoc basis. Once a consensus is reached, a new paradigm is accepted. It displaces its predecessors and, gradually, a new epistemic community, i.e., a community of inquiry, shares the same image of the world. No such consensus presently exists among women who count themselves "feminist."

Feminist women are, by and large, women who have been educated both formally and informally to challenge the gender status quo. For some women, this is threatening to their sense of who and what they are and what their place in the scheme of things ought to be. Some women's primary identity is related to their role and status in a family; for others it may be their position in the public world. Personal and public identities change over the individual or family life cycle—launching a new career or profession, marriage, and retirement, for example. This is as true for men as it is for women. However, whatever their position in the Household or the State, women and men can improve their lot if they understand their roles and responsibilities in the dual systems of human action and act rationally in both the homeplace and the marketplace. The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm is a first step toward a new gender consensus that can take us from the "old feminism" to the "new humanism."

Note

1. In the books I read as a little girl, if Hestia was mentioned at all, she was stereotyped as a "virgin, a "spinster," a "stay-at-home old maid." Who would be interested in such a dull goddess? As recently as 1999 in an elaborately illustrated book on Greek myth, Mary Barnett describes Hestia briefly as a virgin aunt about whom there were no myths, who stayed at home and looked after everyone else, "yet because her cult was a family cult it was important to ordinary people" (62). Such comments do not do justice to Hestia about whom it could as well be said that "still waters run deep."