Patricia J. Thompson
(Yelena V. Mayakovsky)

FATAL ABSTRACTIONS

The Parallogics of Everyday Life

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BOOK 3

THE HESTIA TRILOGY

PETER LANG
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INTRODUCTION

> There is something wrong with every monological philosophy.... Can the monological structure of Western philosophy be attributed to the cultural discouragement of participation by women thinkers at the very highest levels? —Adriaan Theodoor Peperzak

The Hestia trilogy responds to the epigraph's challenge to women thinkers. It seeks to re-connect women's roles in antiquity to women's roles in modernity while severing them from strict gender prescriptions. It offers a comprehensive introduction to Hestian Feminism, a perspective that recognizes "hearth and home" as a time-honored metaphor in Western cultures; it traces its origin to the ancient concept of *oikonomeia*, the management of the *oikos*, or Greek household/family unit. Nancy C. Hook and Beatrice Paolucci (1970) designate this unit "the family ecosystem."

Hestian Feminism: Conceptualizing the Quotidian

Hestian Feminism rejects dominant patriarchal paradigms that subordinate the private to the public, the domestic to the civic, and the familial to the political. As an alternative to a monofocal standpoint and a monological discourse, it offers the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm to conceptualize two systems of action involved in the quotidian events of human life. It invokes the image of the "double helix" to convey their intertwined and co-emergent properties.

The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm is based on the recovery of two ancient Greek mythemes. Hestia, sedate guardian of the *hestia*, or hearthfire, presided over the private domain of the *oikos*, the homeplace of the Greek family. She represents, in addition to continuity with stability, the self-sufficiency and integrity of both the individual and the family. In the *Homeric Hymns*, Hestia is linked to her trickster nephew Hermes, responsible for trade, commerce, rhetoric, and communication in the public domain of the *polis*, the ancient Greek city-state. Hermes served as guardian of the marketplace, or *agora*. Hestia is thus associated with the Family and the systems of action necessary to sustain and nurture it; Hermes is

associated with the State and the systems of action necessary to govern and maintain it.

The dual mythogems represent a contrast set that identifies two systemic "constants"—the homeplace, or *oikos*-system, and the marketplace, or *polis*-system—in human affairs. Each is a subsystem of a larger, more complex socio-cultural macrosystem. The systems are self-organizing (*autopoietic*) and self-regulating. Systems concepts (input, throughput, output, and feedback) explain their dynamic—indeed dialectical and dialogical—relationship. A change in one system or a part of one system will predictably cause changes in other systems.

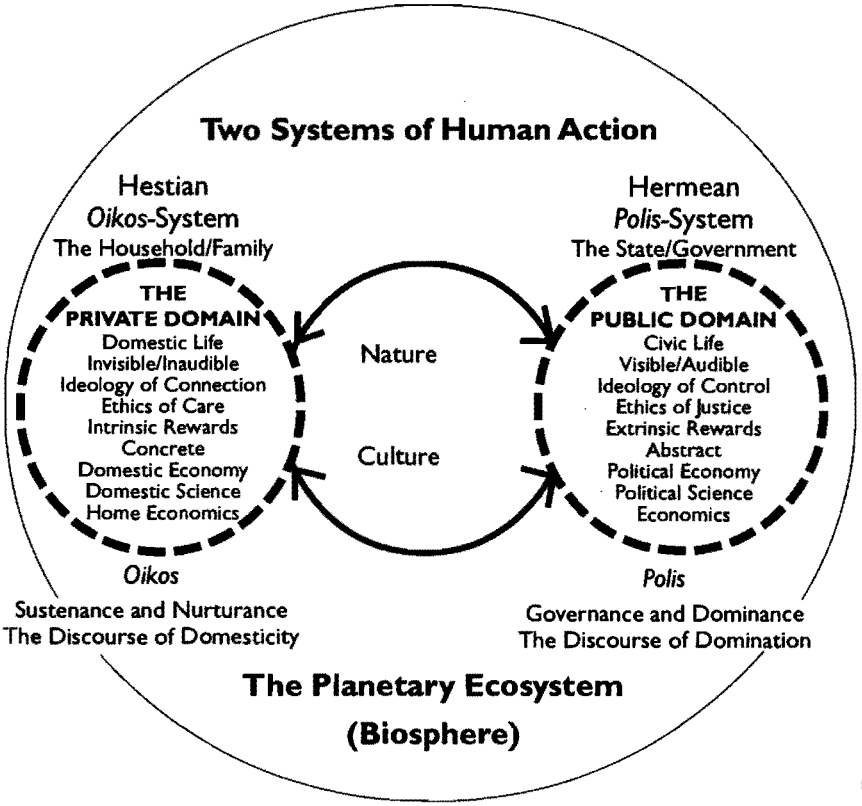
As an explanatory theory, the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm provides an opportunity to keep issues related to the Family as an institution and issues related to the State as an institution simultaneously in mind. The advantage of this re-vision is that the interconnections, interactions, and interdependencies of the dual systems can be identified, tracked, and analyzed. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 1 on page xvii; it was included in the previous two volumes.

The proposed Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm reveals two distinctive human standpoints: one grounded in the *oikos*, or ancient Greek household, and one grounded in the *polis*, or ancient Greek city-state. The two can be conceptualized in the present day as the Household/Family and the Government/State. While they have been studied separately, their continuing systemic relationship is neglected in the master narrative of patriarchy. I argue that neglect of these dual standpoints has had serious consequences for humankind that need to be redressed. The first volume in the trilogy, *The Accidental Theorist: The Double Helix of Everyday Life*, traces the long-standing fascination of humans with fire, with the household hearth as a primal site of social organization, and with fire imagery associated with sexuality and gender. In several cultures, fire conservation and hearth-keeping rituals were pre-conditions to meeting everyday human needs, and fire- and hearth-related activities remained in the control of women. The primal attraction of fire, notably the fire contained in the *hestia*, was recognized by the ancient Greeks as a site of contemplation and, by extension, of philosophical and theoretical thought.

Hestian Feminism is "hearth-centered" and *oikos*-centric; it contrasts with a feminist focus (*focus* is the Latin word for "hearth") that is *polis*-centric or public. It invites comparison of the domestic (homeplace) economy with the political (marketplace) economy. The standpoints pro-

Figure 1

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. The relationships among elements in a bounded set are stronger than links to elements that are not part of the set's "whole." Some systems are relatively open, and some are relatively closed. System boundaries have "admit" and "exit" points. "Admit points" allow for inputs and "exit points" allow for outputs. Systems exchange energy and information across boundaries at their interfaces. They also admit inputs from other systems and exit outputs to other systems. Output that returns to the original system as input is called feedback. 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.

vided by these two locations offer dual lenses of analysis with which to revision phenomena that were previously viewed through a monofocal patriarchal lens and communicated in a monological master narrative. Human activities such as care and concern (essential to meet individual and group needs for sustenance and nurturance) are termed "hestian"; behaviors such as domination and control (essential to meet the system goal of governance) are termed "hermean." The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm utilizes systems theory to define the activities and discourses (of domesticity and domination) typical of each system. In Figure 2, introduced in the trilogy's first volume, the systems' interdependency is conceptualized as the intertwined "double helix of everyday life."

The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm takes feminist theory beyond gender to account for a continuum of human traits. It shifts our focus from two gendered spheres to two interactive systems. Both sexes have equal access to the standpoints identified as *oikos*-centric and *polis*-centric and the traits and activities identified as hestian and hermean.

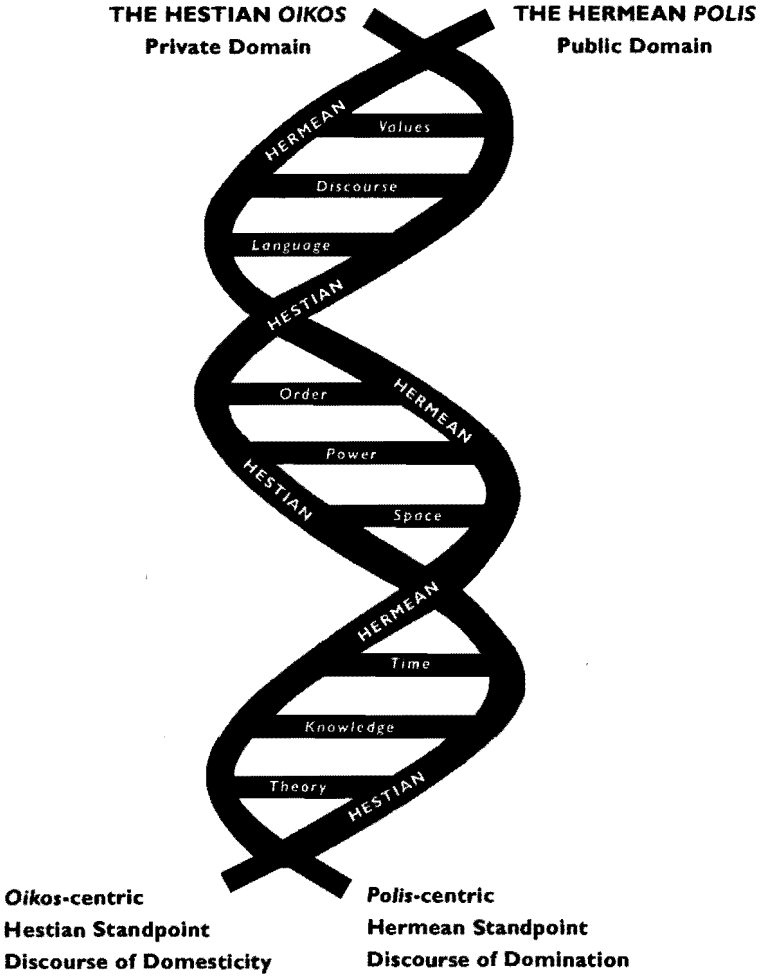
The second volume of the trilogy, *In Bed with Procrustes: Feminism's Flirtation with Patriarchy* challenges a one-size-fits-all feminism in which patriarchal categories limit women's free expression of ideas and choice of lifestyle (including traditional family roles). It suggests that feminists must go beyond gender to seek equity for women and men in their common humanity.

The "bed of Procrustes" represents forced equality vs. respect for difference, including differences among women (and men) who share a feminist commitment. New meanings are revealed when "hestian" (or "hestianeutic") readings and interpretations disclose the limitations of hermean paradigms in such disciplines as classics, philosophy, history, political science, sociology, psychology, economics, science and technology, and ethics. The disciplines "speak" in different languages. Although different disciplines examine the same or similar problems, their paradigms are often incommensurable.

Introducing and employing a "common language" within an over-arching paradigm is a first step to resolving problems of incommensurability. Adopting hestian/hermean lenses, as suggested by the new paradigm, allows us to compare and contrast interdisciplinary issues related to language, standpoints, and perspectives within a systems framework. As Thomas Kuhn points out, the reception of a new paradigm necessitates a redefinition of the corresponding science.

Figure 2

THE DOUBLE HELIX OF EVERYDAY LIFE



The double helix of everyday life emerges from dual locations: the private domain *oikos* and the public domain *polis*. These serve to ground dual standpoints. The *oikos*-centric hestian standpoint generates a discourse of domesticity; the *polis*-centric hermean standpoint generates a discourse of domination. The dual discourses intertwine so that hestian/hermean concepts are represented in their distinctive contexts.

Plan of the Book

Fatal Abstractions: The Parallogics of Everyday Life is the concluding volume in the Hestia trilogy. It applies the principles of Hestian Feminism introduced in previous volumes to a variety of topics and contemporary problems. Its intent is to demonstrate the utility of the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm as an explanatory schema. It continues the line of inquiry begun in the first two volumes and suggests how hestian/hermean standpoints can be applied to a number of intellectual and practical concerns. It applies the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm in various contexts where, as suggested in Volume 2, patriarchal paradigms prove inadequate for the study of complex social problems that might benefit from interdisciplinary approaches that go "beyond gender." It synthesizes the work of feminist and other scholars whose work in diverse disciplines holds relevance for the project the trilogy represents, that is, to move us from the "old feminism" to a "new humanism."

Part I of this volume, "The Hestian Paradigm: The Parallogics of Everyday Life," provides support for the idea that the dual systems proposed by the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm recognize thought forms that receive only passing attention in the patriarchal literature.

The Prologue, "Autobiography of a Brain," reflects on the author's personal and intellectual history, extending insights gained from her own development to the realm of systems thinking and educational theory. It explains her view of home economics, also called "family and consumer science," as a discipline that promotes a holistic perspective on everyday experience and makes significant contributions to a knowledge base essential to living a satisfying private and public life.

Chapter 1, "A Hestian Feminist Perspective on Dualism," confronts the perplexing issue of dualism that provokes much feminist controversy. The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm promotes a dynamic view of dualism. It views "twoness" as complementary and dialogical. It raises the issue of the de-valuation of the private sphere and the over-valuation of the public sphere. It further suggests that the brain's dual hemispheres may support different styles of thinking and different worldviews, with the speculation that hestian thinking is located in the right hemisphere and hermean thinking is lodged in the left hemisphere. It offers "Sister Occam's razor" as a way to distinguish the two systems involved in everyday life.

Chapter 2, "Fatal Abstractions: Paradigms, Paradoxes, and Parallogics,"

addresses issues raised when women can apply a "language of their own" to communicate concerns at variance with those of patriarchal reality-definers. It suggests that the hestian/hermean domains co-order rather than contest the paradoxes discerned in the patriarchal master narrative. The dual systems support lines of reasoning that can be described as parallogics.

Chapter 3, "A Hestian Feminist Reflection on Spatiality and Temporality," expands our understanding of private/public spatial and temporal concepts in conformity with the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm.

Chapter 4, "The Discourse of Domination and the Discourse of Domesticity," reclaims the discourse of domesticity as a contrast with the prevailing discourse of domination in patriarchal texts. It challenges us to deconstruct taken-for-granted hermean interpretations of texts and offers the alternative of a a "hestianeutic" interpretative protocol.

Chapter 5, "The Hestian Palimpsest in Patriarchal Texts," argues that we must discern the hestian palimpsest that lies beneath the surface of patriarchal texts as well as the hermean palimpsest that remains in feminist texts. The insights of sociologist Wayne Brekhus (discussed in Chapter 2 of Volume 2), are used to identify the hermean as a "marked" category and the hestian as an "unmarked" category in the dual systems paradigm.

Chapter 6, "A Hestian Feminist Reads Habermas," demonstrates how a hestian reading of this influential social theorist would differ from feminist readings based on gender.

Chapter 7, "For Love or Money? Why Hestian Work Is Not 'Housework'," reveals how the syntactical conjunction of love and work suggests they are two discrete phenomena. It argues that unpaid hestian work in the homeplace is devalued while paid hermean work in the marketplace is privileged in theory and practice.

Part II, "Thinking Hestian in a Hermean World," reveals how seeing through hestian, rather than gender lenses, can provide new insights into issues of special concern to women and men in pursuit of a "new humanism" in the new millennium.

Chapter 8, "Identity-Formation: A Hestian/Hermean Analysis," addresses three levels of identity through the lenses of the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm.

Chapter 9, "Women in the Hermean Domain at the Turn of the New Millennium" examines the increasing participation of women in the marketplace, in politics, and in higher education. It also describes the commodification of Hestia in marketing domesticity.

Chapter 10, "A Hestian Feminist Looks at Family Values," discusses some of the private/public issues related to a topic frequently raised in the political realm but with little theoretical foundation in the family realm.

Chapter 11, "Educating for Everyday Life: The Co-Responsible Option," applies philosopher Lisa Heldke's concept to education in the hestian/hermean systems.

Chapter 12, "Education for Domestic Literacy," argues for parity between accepted models of education for civic literacy and a Hestian feminist model for domestic literacy.

Chapter 13, "The Rape of a Discipline: A Case Study of Hestian Education in the Hermean Academy," narrates the author's experience as a participant-observer in an academic power play that rendered a female-intensive discipline (home economics) voiceless and invisible and subject to "identify theft."

The Epilogue, "The Hestian Imperative in the New Millennium," proposes the adoption of the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm as a way to reconcile disparate habits of thought based on distinctive cultural (rather than gender) norms. The proposal by Pauline Johnson for a "radical humanism" is discussed as a promising new direction. The need is for feminist theory to go "beyond gender" in establishing equilibrium between the familial (domestic) and political (civic) interests of humankind as a precondition to achieving a "new humanism" that is gender equitable.

PROLOGUE

Autobiography of a Brain[1]

> Expressive capacities are assigned to women, instrumental abilities to men. Yet these stereotypes show an adulthood that is out of balance, favoring separateness over connection, and leaning more toward an autonomous life of work than toward the interdependence of love and care. —Carol Gilligan

Even as a little girl, I liked to think. I've had a lifelong love affair with my brain! I'm fascinated by how my mind works. I like to play with ideas. I like putting information together in ways that suit my needs and interests. My synapses snap new ideas into place like pieces of a private puzzle. When I make a new connection, I feel the light go in my mind. I have always tried to figure out what was going on around me.

In elementary school, there was a second grade teacher into whose class some students had been promoted from a "slower" to a "smarter" section. School administrators seem to think children are unaware they are being labeled when put in classes like "$2A^1$," "$2A^2$," " $2A^3$,"or "$2A^4$." At P.S. 69, in Jackson Heights, Queens, where we then lived, I had been moved (after mastering English) from the "4" class to the "1" class. The teacher asked newcomers, "Who was the smartest one in your class?" Without hesitation, I raised my hand and said, "I am!" I felt that if I did not speak on my own behalf, a popular boy (who didn't seem at all "smart" to me) would be named! I was motivated by a sense of fairness and honesty more than a wish for personal distinction.

I had already learned what it was like to be overlooked and "passed over" when teachers could not relate to me. I noticed that boys who raised their hands were called on before girls who raised theirs. I heard boys praised for things that did not seem especially notable. Girls (myself included) were "shushed" at the risk of being thought "unlady-like." Why were girls treated differently from boys? Why couldn't girls speak for themselves? Why were women's ideas considered unimportant?

Self-Creation: Becoming a "Self"

The task of self-creation starts early. I thought of myself as an adventurer, testing ideas to see which fit best into that unique organ I was told was my brain. I was led to believe that bright boys and brilliant men were the models to emulate. At the same time, I remember how my teachers interfered with the free play of ideas. I liked to write and draw. I was once criticized for writing that "rain came down in sheets" by a literal fourth grade teacher who had no liking for metaphors or analogies, however trite they may have been. I recall drawing a woman whose body was a triangle and whose feet were little triangles at the edge of the broad base of her skirt. "Legs belong together," my teacher announced sternly. She clearly had no taste for avant-garde art! Or she may have been communicating her own idea of gender propriety. Undeterred, I retreated to my own thoughts, a little rebellious perhaps, but fortunate that more sympathetic teachers would eventually enter my educational environment.

Preparation for the "Art of Living"

A turning point came when, as a teenager, I won admission to a public school for artistically gifted youth, the High School of Music and Art in New York (now called LaGuardia High School). To this day I am grateful to my eighth grade teacher, Lillian Schaettle, who guided me in that direction. Learning in an environment that valued creativity and originality was my salvation. Drawing and painting were emotionally and intellectually satisfying. Experimenting with different media and different styles of expression was liberating. Gender did not appear to be a factor. There were recognized women artists (such as Vigée Lebrun) whose work was acclaimed. Still, the truly "great" artists were all men! I fantasized about working as a fashion or costume designer. That early ambition might explain my later attraction to the great Finnish designer, Marimekko, some of whose classic creations still hang in my closet. My own designs drew upon elements from the history of costume. With the exception of queens like Elizabeth and Victoria, who lent their names to historical periods, and martyrs like Joan of Arc who challenged arbitrary patriarchal authority, the impression gained was of women's secondary role in public life. I didn't want to be a queen, and I didn't want to be a martyr, either. I just wanted to be—*me*!

The art principles I learned in high school—perspective, harmony, contrast, proportion, symmetry, asymmetry, and unity, for example—remained

with me as preparation for "the art of living." Such principles can be applied to life's challenges in many ways.

Protecting a Personal Perspective

Influenced by my mother's convictions about women's equality, I made a conscious effort to maintain a "woman's" (what some today would call "gynocentric") perspective when reading classic or canonical texts. I still resist claims of universality made in texts that do not coincide with my own experience of the world. From my personal perspective, they impose an "alien" logic on thought processes that seem "right" for me. I feel compelled to think for myself and reject thought forms or systems of thought that might diminish or oppress my "true self." I am critical of the "received wisdom" I now recognize as the androcentric standpoint universalized as *the* "human" perspective.

Protecting my personal perspective began with recognizing woman-in-historical-social context. It does not take a smart girl or an intelligent woman long to sense that she is being patronized whenever she expresses resistance to masculist discourses, even when communicated by women who call themselves "feminist." I wanted to acknowledge the context of women's lives without defining women's lifeworld by gender—to the then familiar (and now discredited) notions of "man's sphere" and "woman's sphere." The metaphor of "woman's place" is problematic because it promotes stereotyped gender roles without addressing the unique abilities of individual women and men in performing daily tasks. Sharp distinctions in gender roles do not consider the intertwined activities of the two sexes in the "double helix" of everyday life.

A Liberal Arts Education for Women

I was fortunate to attend Barnard, the women's college of Columbia University, where I could remain connected to the arts—the great museums and exhibitions I had come to take for granted during my high school years. I am not sure when I first realized I was not a "misfit." I was just a female human being with a mind of her own. Of one thing I was certain. I did not want to be an "imitation man" in my thinking or my behavior.

In my college days, I had to create my own "women's studies," marking the distinguished achievements of women if, and when, I encountered them, yet still able to appreciate the "great ideas" formulated by thinking men. In

the first volume of this trilogy I recount my resistance to thinking within the frameworks established by male philosophers of indisputable ability, but I have never been able to build up the animus against men that seems to be prerequisite for some feminist positions. What, I wondered, was the role of an intelligent woman in the modern world? Did she have to mimic men? Did she have to pursue the same goals and adopt the same thought processes that qualify a man as "brilliant" or even (like my own father) a "genius"?

Much, much, later in life I would learn that, at the turn of the 20th century, a debate between President Charles Eliot of Harvard and President M. Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr had foreshadowed my dilemma. At issue was what model of higher education would be appropriate for women. President Thomas drew a line in the sand, declaring:

> President Eliot said that the president and faculty of a women's college had no guide from the past, that the great tradition of learning...from the time of the Egyptians to the present existed only for men and that this vast body of inherited tradition was of no service to women's education, that women's colleges simply imitated men when they used the same educational methods instead of inventing new ones of their own and that furthermore, it would indeed be strange if women's intellects were not at least as unlike men's as their bodies. (1899, cited in Cross 1965, 141–42)

Thereupon Thomas launched into a "scolding" that brought her and her ideal of the "Bryn Mawr woman" to national attention. She called Eliot's statement a "dark spot of medievalism" in his "otherwise luminous intelligence" (ibid., 142). Over a century later, the grounds for this debate, in which Eliot appears to have been the loser, are worth re-examining in the spirit of "those who are ignorant of their history are condemned to repeat it." Carey was outraged at the suggestion that women were not men's "equals" and said:

> [Eliot] might as well have told the president of Wellesley to invent a new Christian religion for Wellesley or new symphonies and operas, a new Beethoven and Wagner, new statues and pictures, a new Phidias and a new Titian, new tennis, new golf, a new way to swim, skate and run, new food, and new drink. It would be easier to do all this than create for woman a new science of geography, Greek Tragedies, new Chemistry, new philosophies. In short, a new intellectual heavens and earth. (Ibid.)

Subsequently, Eliot's remarks were the topic of discussion between President Thomas and President Taylor of Vassar. Taylor told Thomas that Eliot had often said that in all the years he had been educating women, he had been trying to find some differences between their intellects and men's and that, whenever he thought he had discovered a difference, the accuracy of his observations was called into question by future classes of students. According to Taylor:

> [Eliot] thought he had found but one difference, a difference of habit of life, the willingness to work more hours on a difficult problem or a difficult passage of translation...[which] he accounted for by the different conditions of women's life and the fact that *a woman's work in the household is never finished.* (Ibid., 143. Emphasis mine.)

I received my education in the aftermath of this debate. I was exposed to the "classic model" of higher learning that typified elite men's Ivy League colleges. It was a fine education and prepared me to "hold my own" in a man's world. Therefore, when I read this passage sometime later in my life, I found myself in Thomas' camp and was incensed at Eliot's suggestion that women were in any way "different" from the "standard issue" male and, by implication, "inferior" to men. I knew too many college men to think that way then, and I know too many male college professors and administrators to think that way now. Almost four decades after first reading these lines, however, they sprang back into my consciousness as I considered the development of a parallel world of Women's Studies to complement the taken-for-granted paradigm that was historically Men's Studies. Now I think Eliot anticipated the need for Women's Studies while Carey was content to expose women to Men's Studies in a female setting. Such observations contributed to destabilizing gender in my reflections on alternative systems of knowledge related to the "different lifeworlds" or "habits of life" hinted at in Eliot's remarks. Where did the continuous (and inescapable) work of the household fit into either concept of education?

I would argue that the birth of the 20th-century women's movement was overdue on the one hand and premature on the other! It was overdue because women had waited too long for public recognition and participation in the institutions that controlled their destinies. It was premature because women did not have the centuries of leisure and thinking time (generations of philosophizing and theorizing for male thinkers) to produce

and to transmit a coherent vision of culture extricated from distorting androcentric assumptions. They had not had the luxury of time to devote to testing ideas and bringing them together in an accepted version of what the world was like for women. Women were re-inventing their past while, at the same time, living an "emancipated" present and planning a more gender-equitable future.

Soon after I graduated from college, consciousness-raising became a popular feminist activity. I was now a "career girl" and, a few years later, a "newlywed" and mother of a son. Consciousness-raising was an awakening for women who thought their experiences were unique. Listening to other women's stories made it clear that women's autonomy and independence were curtailed not so much by individual men in their personal lives as by the collective privilege men enjoyed in their public lives. We experienced it with employers and male co-workers. I found I was not alone in feeling that women were shortchanged in patriarchal society. They still are, but perhaps for different reasons.

A Revolutionary's Feminist Daughter!

The "women's movement" of my time was referred to as a "sex" or "gender" revolution. I was predisposed to "revolution" and may even have inherited genes for a rebellious spirit and for gender justice from my father, the Russian revolutionary poet, Vladimir V. Mayakovsky (Thompson 1993c, 2003a).[2] It is the only way I can explain my quickness to anger when I perceive what I consider to be an injustice or observe the unfair treatment of people who cannot speak up for themselves. I realized that women were among those who were intellectually and creatively, even if not always materially, disadvantaged. At the same time, I resented it when people told me such things as "You think like a man!" What, I wanted to know, was wrong with "thinking like a woman"?

The question uppermost in my mind was: What systems of knowledge had been produced by women? Feminists take an interest in "indigenous knowledges." They are attracted by the "exotic," not the "ordinary" systems of knowledge related to everyday activities in households, families, and homes. What angle of vision, what perspective, what standpoint or viewpoint, do "women's" fields adopt by comparison with patriarchally legitimated systems of knowledge? We cannot continue to address one part of life—the public—at the expense of the private and personal. We need a comprehensive approach that does not rest on the division of labor based on sex.

If knowledge is power in the public domain, it can also be empowering in the private domain. Can feminists justify ignoring fields that empower women and benefit their individual and family well-being? Such fields as home economics, social work, nursing, and early childhood education have contributions to make that are concrete in their long-term effects on human health and welfare, but have been ignored by feminist scholars, who seem to favor economics, sociology, medicine, and higher education.

My intellectual radar scanned the academic horizon: architecture, archeology, anthropology, classics, comparative literature, history, political science, psychology, philosophy, sociology, even theology. I simply could not make up my mind. My indecision brought my intellectual mother to the edge of despair and elicited the criticism that I was a dilettante. What kept me from making a commitment to a discipline? Each field had appealing aspects. But I felt that to enter any one of them would subordinate me to a masculist perspective I did not share. My thinking was "different." I would have to adopt premises that were strangely not "in sync" with my own thinking. I was out of step with the young feminist scholars of my generation who happily latched on to the academic paradigms of patriarchy and added race, class, and gender to the academic mix. This was a worthy and challenging endeavor, and I profited enormously from the insights gained from the rapidly developing scholarship on gender. These women were intellectual pioneers. I read and admired their work, but I found many to be (as stated in Volume 2 of this trilogy) "in bed with Procrustes." I found gender to be too narrow a base on which to build a new "house of knowledge." I could not accept that women had never, ever had anything worthwhile to contribute to human culture and civilization. It was the foundations, I felt, that needed critical re-examination.

Feminist thinkers are challenged to re-think the thoughts of past time from a gender perspective. In addition to gender, I ask that we re-think concepts from a different perspective I call "hestian."

Post-College Career Choice: Discovering Systems Thinking

Choosing an academic discipline and preparing for a career or profession became problematic. What would I do? How would I earn my living? How could I maintain my independence? How could I pursue thinking as a vocation? I had "dipped into" numerous humanities and social science disciplines. Most professional and graduate schools were male dominated. I re-

sisted their exclusionary paradigms—the universal imprint of what I could only, at that time, attribute to "the male mind." It seemed like a capitulation to male dominance, something I could not permit myself to do. There was something about the "essential me" that would not allow it. This resistance to male intellectual control would lead me to the most improbable choice, one that seems to fly in the face of my feminist convictions. Purely and simply, I discovered home economics, a discipline regarded by many as inconsequential and trivial, not challenging enough for a modern woman. I came to the field as an editor of home economics textbooks for the prestigious publishing firm Macmillan. After a difference of opinion about gender roles in these texts, I was fired. I simply wanted to include boys and men engaged in household activities as they do in "real life." A similar job at McGraw-Hill ended in a similar disaster! My male supervisors (not the home economics teachers of the time) were adamantly opposed to this.

Later, as an editor reading manuscripts in environment and ecology, a new way of thinking came to my attention: systems thinking. For a person like me, this was interesting and intellectually stimulating work. Ideas! Ideas! Ideas! As succinctly defined by Dimitris Gavalas:

> Systems theory is the transdisciplinary study of the abstract organization of phenomena independent of their substance, type or spatial or temporal scale of existence; moreover it investigates and uncovers the principles common to all complex activities. (2000, 261)

A systems approach is taken to be a "wholes" approach, and this is what appealed to me immediately. As Hanson (1995) would observe, the benefit of a holistic approach is not focusing on the initial effects but recognizing how these effects are reacted to and how the process amplifies and mutates from the original (12). Systems analysis became the methodology of my doctoral dissertation, "The Textbook's Niche in the Ecology of Education." In it, I drew on my experiences in textbook publishing.

I had majored in political science and minored in philosophy in college. I had applied to law schools, worked for a Wall Street law firm, and matriculated at Columbia University for graduate work in International Law. I abandoned a thesis on "The Sources of Equity in International Law" after a difference of opinion with my stubborn male advisor. I had married, had a child, worked as a science fiction and "romance" editor, and later edited academic texts in the humanities and philosophy and school texts in

social studies and home economics. I had worked in publishing as a "college traveler" and acquisitions editor. I visited college campuses in a sales capacity and scouted them for potential authors in a variety of disciplines. This led to an adjunct appointment in what was then the Home Economics Department at Lehman College.

Home Economics: A Holistic Perspective on Everyday Life

The question I now posed myself was prompted by my previous concern with equity in my studies in law and international law. I experienced culture shock when I turned my academic interests from political economy to domestic economy. Why, I wondered, was the field of home economics perceived so negatively? How, in a period of feminist ferment, could women be so hateful, so patronizing, and so critical of other women in a discipline that had been established through the cooperation of women and men outside established patriarchal norms and paradigms? It was not sociology; it was not psychology. It was what it was: a holistic knowledge system centered on the needs of individuals and families in everyday life. Its objective was the well-being of individuals and families in their domestic units, the family ecosystem. Needless to say, there were no home economics courses at Barnard, though I was to learn later that the subject was in the curriculum at Cornell, New York State's land grant college, an academic institution to which "smart" women of my generation were rarely directed. At the time, "bright" girls were directed by their counselors to attend the "Seven Sisters" colleges; the land grant colleges were not even mentioned.

My memories of "home ec" were 8th grade experiences: white sauce, buttonholes, slipstitching hems. What I encountered when I discovered home economics as a university-level field of study in the United States and elsewhere in the mid-1970s was revealing. Without explicit theoretical writing, it was undergirded by the important principle of integration, seeing life "whole" and responsive to the ongoing processes of individual and family growth and development. This involved esthetic and ethical problem-solving and decision-making from a "homeplace" orientation. At the same time, it prepared young people for work and careers in diverse fields reflecting a "marketplace" perspective on employment. The areas of study were reflected in everyday life: personal development, child care, family relationships, food and nutrition, clothing and textile selection and care, housing design and decoration. It thus had personal and social applications. It was a knowledge system integrated around the specific demands of everyday life and required

that students develop the skills necessary to live independently and creatively. The study's unique goal was the management of human and material resources in a comprehensive "life plan" or "design for living." I would learn later that this was the *oikonomeia* or "household management" of the ancient Greeks and the conceptual forerunner of what we today call "economics." Patriarchy had emphasized political economy at the expense of domestic, or household, economy.

Damning with Faint Praise

One never knows where one will encounter a reference to home economics. In their introduction to a work by Michel Serres (1982) describing parallel developments in science, philosophy, and literary trends (an example of parallogics), the editors include an observation by Nobel Prize winner Richard P. Feynman who recalled that, when at Cornell

> I was rather fascinated by the student body, which seems to me was a dilute mixture of some sensible people in a big mass of dumb people studying home economics....I used to sit in the cafeteria with the students...and try to overhear their conversations and see if there was one intelligent word coming out. You can imagine my surprise when I discovered a tremendous thing....
>
> I listened to a conversation between two girls, and one was explaining that if you want to make a straight line, you see, you go over a certain number to the right for each row you go up, that is, if you go over each time the same amount when you go up a row, you make a straight line. A deep principle of analytic geometry!...
>
> She went on and said, 'suppose you have another line coming in from the other side, and you want to figure out where they are going to intersect. Suppose on one line you go over two to the right for every one you go up, and the other line goes over three to the right for every three that goes up, and the other line goes over three to the right for every one that goes up, and they start twenty steps [stitches?] apart, etc.'— I was flabbergasted. She figured out where the intersection was! It turned out that one girl was explaining to the other how to knit argyle socks. (Ibid., Citing Feynman [1969], "What Is Science?" *The Physics Teacher* 7:6, 314–15.)

The young lady was demonstrating a "hands on" way to teach a geometric principle! Feynman's comment did little to enhance the image of home economics. However, in this instance the "teacher" is speaking to the "novice" about relationships that are constant and that can be understood, i.e., principles that represent relationships, in this case, relationships expressed in numbers. Too often we attend to practical results (the finished products) and ignore or forget the underlying principle(s) or process(es) that guides outcomes. We see the thing itself, the product as it exists, unaware of the mental process that produced the effect. Successful actions (in this case knitting argyle socks) reflect a grasp of the regularities (in science, the "laws") that assure desired results. This requires thought and practice which can, if repeated often enough, become "second nature." Let it be said that I have never mastered analytic geometry *or* knitting! That said, I find in Feynman's observation an example of *sophia* (wisdom) combined with *phronesis* (practical reason). His remark is also tinged with sexism and hermean elitism. It is an example of the abstract and the applied, suggesting a comparison between a hestian (sock-making) perspective and a hermean (proposition-making) perspective!

I was already pro-woman and feminist in my orientation when I came upon this "woman's discipline" that was denigrated for teaching "stitchin' and stirrin'." I was ridiculed by my more "progressive" college classmates who considered me something of a throwback, an "essentialist," for finding this field intellectually challenging. My response? Isn't learning how to live the most important task of human life? What should one know to live each day the best way one can? Whether feminist or traditionalist, the human life cycle and the family life cycle bring challenges and opportunities for which a person (female *or* male) must be prepared and, prepared or not, he or she must *act!* The question is whether or not one acts in an informed and intelligent way. No one else can live your life for you! What attracted me to home economics was not that it was a "woman's view." It was a view from within the household/family unit, looking *out* from the *oikos*, or homeplace, rather than looking *in* from the *polis*, or marketplace. This shift in perspective or "angle of vision" was a revelation. It confirmed that the issue of gender per se was not the only defining one to explain women's disadvantaged position. The "homeplace" offered an alternative standpoint and viewpoint on social reality that needed to be considered in the conduct of men's and women's everyday lives. Like it or not, women and men were in it together!

A Different Voice and a Different Perspective

In the epigraph, Carol Gilligan (then an associate professor of human development at Harvard's School of Education) was presenting breakthrough ideas based on her seminal research on women's moral development. They circulated at a time in my life that was focused on the problem of how and what made women's behavior "different." Perhaps the real question was whether "different" human contexts require "different" human behaviors. Gilligan's findings contrasted with paradigms of male development and led her to distinguish between pleasing others and helping others. It was possible to separate caretaking activities from approval-seeking activities.

Some women scholars, eager for acceptance and approval within masculist disciplines, were all too ready to dismiss the work of 19th-century women as "the cult of true womanhood" or "the cult of domesticity." They wrote pejoratively of women's "domestic ideology." At the same time, feminist scholars showed interest in women's minds. According to Alison Jaggar (1983):

> [W]omen's perceptions of reality are systematically distorted or denied. This happens not simply on an individual level; the patriarchal picture of human nature and society is integral to patriarchal culture and science. Even language itself becomes a weapon by which 'the Fathers' diminish the range of women's thought. (114)

At about this time, Professor Jaggar was conducting feminist seminars. If my memory serves, they were at Rutgers. She extended an invitation to feminist scholars through one of the periodicals I read at the time. I sent an application in order to add the "different" voice of home economics, but I never received even an acknowledgment of my application. Such rebuffs began to accumulate. Such rejections seemed condescending and patronizing. Instead of taking them personally, I took them as rejections of the discipline I sought to represent. The result was that I "dug in my heels" and tried to find out why women would treat other well-meaning, thinking women in such a dismissive way. I would collect many such rejections from women conference organizers and editors whose work I admired and drew upon as I went on my "different path," the academic road "less traveled."

With a secure sense of "self" and the conviction that I was pretty bright, such slights simply strengthened my resolve. At about this time, a group of like-minded women and a few men launched the Special Interest Group (SIG) "Home Economics Research" at the American Educational Research

Association. Some twenty years later, it continues to pursue research and theory in home economics. However, it would persist in a period during which home economics units were changing their names or, with the introduction of Women's Studies in academe, eliminated altogether. This "erasure" was clearly political; courses in the discipline were incorporated in other units and departments of colleges and universities. The subject matter was taught, but the perspective was changed. After almost a century identified with the home economics discipline, the American Home Economics Association changed its name to "Family and Consumer Sciences" in 1995. I read such changes as efforts to attain "respectability" in the patriarchal Academy, a topic discussed in Chapter 13, this volume.

Re-claiming Hestia for Feminism

My studies have helped me explain to my own satisfaction why I have promulgated a theory based on ancient Greek mythogems. I share my father's view of metaphor, that is, transferring attributes, which up to the present have been associated with certain things only, to other words, things, phenomena, and notions (cited in Hyde 1970, 47). It seems fair to provide this explanation for having labeled myself a Hestian feminist. As a metaphor, Hestia, the ancient Greek goddess of the hearthfire, represents the sanctity and continuity of the Family, called the *oikos* by the ancient Greeks. Hestia, in my feminist view, represents personal integrity, steadfastness, and the distinctive autonomy and independence necessary to preserve the systems of action that characterize the homeplace and the household economy, generation after generation. By contrast, the external public world of the *polis*, or State, is represented metaphorically by Hermes, Hestia's trickster nephew, associated with numeracy and commerce, essential for transactions in the marketplace and the political economy of the State in successive political regimes.

Michel Serres (1982) makes Don Juan, the prototypical seducer and ladies' man, the first "hero" of modernity and, like Hermes, one who wanders and journeys. In their thumbnail sketch of Hermes, editors Harari and Bell overlook the cunning by which Hermes inserted himself into the company of the gods, choosing to focus on issues of parricide and heroic rescues. Serres focuses on Hermes' relationship to other gods, ignoring his relation to Hestia, even though the pair are invoked together in the Homeric *Hymn to Hermes.* The editors assert that:

> Mythology in antiquity confirms this vision of Hermes as 'philosopher.' Through his qualities of inspiration, invention, innovation, and independence, Hermes represents the best that philosophy has to offer when it is concerned with the preservation of qualities inherent to life—the nonthanatocratic solution. (xxxii)

On my reading, Hermes (see Volume 1, Chapter 5 of this trilogy) achieved his objectives through trickery and deceptive rhetoric. I would hope that duplicity and chicanery would not be "the best philosophy has to offer." The editors' evaluation should be called into question from a means/ends perspective. If the end is justified by the means, then Hermes is your man! If integrity and fidelity to principle are important, then Hestia is your guide. Hermes' "maiden aunt" might exemplify a different "nonthanatocratic" principle by protecting the continuity of the Family. I cite this to illustrate differing views of the mythogems employed in the Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm and the value of a Hestian feminist re-reading of classic texts. Serres contrasts the "human" with the "exact" sciences. I would argue that so long as both the human and the exact sciences remain androcentric and *polis*-centric, fruitful exchanges between them will be limited and short lived. The social world is both personal and impersonal, and the physical world is apprehended both sensually (directly) and intellectually (indirectly). Subjectivity and objectivity represent different grasps of reality. Viewing these as system interfaces rather than as rigid boundaries permits complementary, not contesting, perspectives.

If we continue to re-think ideas from a hermean perspective, as I tried to show in Volume 2 of this trilogy, we are complicit in perpetuating the very ideas that have contributed to the oppression of women and that also obliterate the human concern with *oikos*-centric activities. With ultimate hubris, we "moderns" may consign such interests to the "irrational" or (worse yet) the "trivial." Our "ways of thinking" or "thought forms," structured by patriarchy, reject concepts that appear to contradict a "rational" explanation, so we lose the essence of ideas that make them significant resources for "new" thoughts or "new" ideas.

The Quest for "Common Denominators"

It is important to examine the processes by which theorists, researchers, and educators arrive at their concepts of "sameness" and "difference" and

ask how they are influenced by androcentric assumptions and patriarchal paradigms. The academic disciplines, as women encountered them in my time, were already biased in favor of the male sex and the hermean standpoint. As Martha Nussbaum (1997) observes:

> If women entered into the disciplines at all, they did so without questioning the traditional methodology and subject matter of the disciplines. They did not demand that they be allowed to do research on the lives of women, and thus these lives remained largely unstudied, in disciplines ranging from art history to classics to psychology and history....we knew very little about the history of women, about their psychology, their bodies, their religious attitudes, their philosophical ideas. (3)

In Volume 2 of this trilogy, I suggested that the disciplines not only excluded women in their origin and development, they have been presented through a lens that is both androcentric and hermean. That is, it is *polis*-centric rather than *oikos*-centric. A consequence of *polis*-centric bias is that the Family as an institution does not receive attention from scholars or theorists (male or female) comparable to that accorded to the State. It is not studied "in its own space" or from a standpoint within that space in the same way that the State is studied. The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm (see Figure 1, p. xvii) attempts to compensate for, and perhaps to remedy and rectify, this one-sidedness in a balanced, comprehensive, nongendered model.

Conclusions

Over the final decades of the 20th century, and with the advent of Women's Studies and woman-centered research and theory, there has been some modification of disciplinary suprastructures, but their infrastructures remain as firmly grounded in patriarchal soil as that of any nation state. Women have been treated as "outsiders" to the world of ideas and the parade of events deemed significant for Man and "mankind." Images of Woman were male defined, emphasizing the extremes of sexuality and a "contrary" ethical stance or morality, a problem addressed by Carol Gilligan and her colleagues at Harvard. Why were women singled out for their "morality" but rarely commended for their "originality" or their "intellectuality"?

Most men and many women of my academic acquaintance find nothing to criticize in the monological discourses of their disciplines. In Volume

2, I suggested that much may be lost in trying to "fit" feminist ideas into the same patriarchal paradigms—the "bed of Procrustes"—in my metaphor. Those amputated members need to be re-membered. The Hestian/Hermean Dual Systems Paradigm offers a standpoint (dual standpoints, in fact) from which to introduce "thought forms" with which to address this omnipresent question. One of the great achievements of feminist thought in its broadest effect is by adding gender, race, and class as modifying categories to these patriarchal thought forms.

As shown in the trilogy's previous volumes, even among feminists, danger lurks in the patriarchal or masculist tendency to judge anything that does not fit into a hierarchical, totalizing discourse as irrational. There is no one monolithic feminism, nor should there be. Just as there are varieties of thought among men, there should be acceptable differences in women's theoretical and philosophical perspectives. A plurality of "women's voices" speak in different political and disciplinary "tongues." Hermean systems of thought support the dominance and control of the hestian domain directly or indirectly by men. This is one source of the "fatal abstractions" that constitute the focus of this volume.

Notes

1. Parts of this prologue and the next chapter were first presented at the Pennsylvania Home Economics Association in a paper, "Home Economics: The Right Side of the Brain," at Wilkes Barre, PA, on May 8, 1982.

2 I leave open the question of the parallel developments I see dictated by genetics and fostered by my gifted, intelligent mother, "Elly" Jones, and the extraordinary love and devotion shown me by two stepfathers, some of which is recounted in *Mayakovsky: Phantom Father* (Thompson, 2003a).