



A New Dawn for the Second Sex: Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective

Um Novo Amanhecer para o Segundo Sexo: As Práticas de Liberdade das Mulheres na Perspectiva Mundial

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Review of | Resenha de:

VINTGES, Karen. *A New Dawn for the Second Sex: Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017.

The book *A New Dawn for the Second Sex. Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective* of Karen Vintges (a University Lecturer in Political and Social Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam), highlights what is most original in terms of the analogy between the legendary Essay of the 20th century, *The Second Sex*, and women's practices today. Its great thematic relevance is demonstrated in two possibilities of reading which dialogue between themselves. On the one hand, the way the most famous work of Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second sex* (1949), is treated in an updated fashion in contemporary society. On the other hand, the interlocution with practices of women beyond the European centrality.

Since her earliest publications, such as *Philosophy as Passion: The Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir* (1996); *Feminism and the Final Foucault* (2004); *Women, Feminism and Fundamentalism* (2007), and several other books in Dutch and some academic articles published in journals in the USA and other Countries, Vintges has shown her seriousness toward feminist research and its openness to dialogue with other cultures, especially, Muslim. The difficulties many Western groups have shown in analyzing and understanding Eastern culture, in its various shades, do not find room in the research and books of Karen Vintges. On the contrary, she shows sensitivity and intelligence in dealing with the dialogical foundations between cultures.

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The book by Karen Vintges, *A New Dawn for the Second Sex. Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective*, is available either in print, for who enjoys this medium, or as a e-book. Her book demonstrates tenacity in new dialectical proposals with time and with cultural differences. The book interacts in a very innovative way with the thinking of Simone Beauvoir and Michel Foucault, especially in their line of thought. Such methodological interlocution looks at post-colonial authors because "Western philosophy should revise its concepts and perspectives in the context of our globalized world."¹ Beauvoir and Foucault methodological concern is here taken as a way of enabling new theoretical and practical views on the issues of feminist proposals. But a question remains: To what extent is Simone de Beauvoir's study *The Second Sex* still relevant?

This question which appears in the editorial presentation of the book is very instigating. The only way to treat patriarchy would be to consider him a monster? But what kind of monster have we subjected ourselves to during centuries and millennia? Well, for the author, patriarchy is a "many-headed monster". Over the past decades, various heads of this monster have been slayed: important breakthroughs have been achieved by and for women in law, politics, and economics.

Feminist movements are now going through different paths, and this can be seen as both complex and autonomous, as something equally complex and debilitating in the face of patriarchal power. From her book then can one say that patriarchy is a sneaky monster like a Hydra? What is this? "A multi-headed monster that grows several new heads every time one head is cut off". How to face its power? Since different—often hybrid—heads of patriarchy dominate in different settings, "feminism requires a variety of strategies". Women's movements all over the world today are critically creating "new models of self and society in their own contexts". Drawing on notions of Simone de Beauvoir, as well as Michel Foucault, this book outlines a "feminism in a new key," which consists of women's various freedom practices, each hunting the Hydra in their own key—but with mutual support.

The author invites us to think as a cultural interlocution and this is our great challenge today. She is of the understanding that Foucault's and Beauvoir's works on ethics show some remarkable parallels that allow us to finally synthesize their approaches in a concept of ethical 'freedom practices', in distinct sets of critically creative ethical life projects. These are coined in terms of some core characteristics, like "freedom in terms of an ethical practice", "one's visible behavior and acting in the world", "a critique of any domination", "creation of ethical self-practices" and "art of life" and the possibility to situate ethics as "the concrete projects of groups of individuals and of individuals within them".

¹ VINTGES, 2017, p. 17.

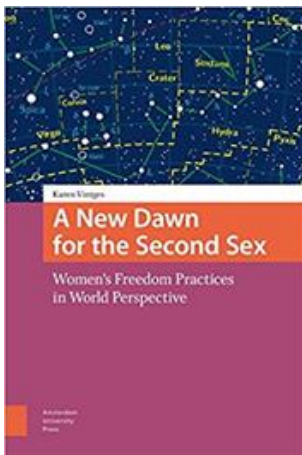


The author's concept of freedom practices refers as well to collective level, to identifiable and distinct relatively independent ethical communities, groups or networks offering self-techniques, and models for creating a concrete ethical way of life. But it also covers the personal level, the creation of a personal ethos in such a context, as Vintges writes in her book².

Karen Vintges certainly provides her readers with profound and relevant issues for the present era, especially for the refinement with which the dialogical dimension between cultures and the various customs outlined in her book.

Referência

VINTGES, Karen. *A New Dawn for the Second Sex: Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017.



² VINTGES, 2017, pp. 47-48.