

Presentation

Domination relationships between human beings are expressed in diverse ways; some of them are linked with hierarchical conceptions based on the set of physical traits that set us apart like, for example, those which define the distinction between sexes.

In this issue, **INTERdisciplina** presents some important contributions by feminist theory towards the comprehension of the processes that lead to social inequality. Our *Feminisms* dossier showcases the diversity of approaches from which these researches are undertaken.

The study of the social construction of oppression relationships is carried out from different critical perspectives that question stereotypes and essentialist visions of differences and inequalities, as they study them in their complexity.

Even conceding that the term sex—in etymological terms—is reminiscent of the idea of separation, the distinction between the sexes is not restricted to a man-woman dualism, but rather covers a range that enables us to perceive that bias against women is a manifestation of multiple oppressions. If we dilute, and consequently break the alignment between sex and gender, we can reaffirm a critical posture vis à vis oppression, as we include in our study a critique of normative pretensions and attempts at social control.

Approaching these distinctions as power relationships, feminism proposes—from a systemic point of view—the concept of intersectionality, which sets out to study the interaction between subordination relationships that emerge from, for example, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or social/economic situation. This approach not only enables us to become familiar with the processes that generate social inequalities, but also the reproduction of mechanisms of existing power structures, as we show the reiteration of these discriminating relationships which, in this case, are those of sex, race and class.

Feminist theories examine domination systems, exhibiting great capacity for reflection. This reflection not only encompasses feminism itself, that identifies its own hegemonic trends, but also scientific knowledge and the urge to expose and correct gender bias. It comprises a corpus of knowledge that is fundamental for the very development of science: it enables us to delve into the relationship between what is natural and what is cultural, in ontological and epistemological terms. In any case, the conception of gender as a social construct and, therefore, a political and historic category, imbues feminisms with great transforming power in the quest for equality among human beings.

The conceptual tools that emerge from feminist approaches enable us to

explain and understand the social processes that establish and reproduce not only a structure for the oppression of women and all other members of sexually diverse groups, but all types of relationships involving discrimination and subordination. In this sense, they represent a pillar for the establishment, by means of education, of guidelines for living together based on respect for the dignity of all individuals, and the promotion of liberty and equality. ■