

Makale Geliş Tarihi | Received: 10.04.2022
Makale Kabul Tarihi | Accepted: 25.04.2022

E-ISSN: 2148-9327
<http://dergipark.org.tr/kilikya>
Araştırma Makalesi | Research Article

WOULD A FEMINIST APPROPRIATION OF THE KANTIAN THOUGHT BE POSSIBLE?

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Abstract: It is one of the main allegations impelled by feminist theorists against Kant's philosophy that the subject Kant placed at the base of his understanding of rationality is masculine, a Westerner and belongs to upper/middle class. In fact, there is considerable supporting evidence to promote this claim for mainstream Western philosophy in general and Kant's philosophy in particular. On the other hand, while reckoning with the history of philosophy, and examining whether it is possible to break away from philosophical concepts and categories or not, is another matter of discussion. In this article, I try to focus on various possibilities that can reconcile Kant's philosophy with the demands of liberal feminism and an inclusive democratic participation principle. It is important that to discuss whether it is possible to make a new reading that can be reconciled with feminist demands by ignoring the misogynistic discourses in Kant's works, especially starting from the concepts of autonomy and personality. Today, many factors like traditions, prejudices, oppressive forms of government, etc. prevent women from taking part in public life as free agents and autonomously, and from being considered as "subjects with the status of rights". Therefore, I argue that Kant's concepts such as *autonomy*, *becoming a person* and *having the conditions for free action*, do have something in common with feminist demands.

Keywords: Kant, Autonomy, Personhood, Feminism, Pluralism

KANTÇI DÜŞÜNCENİN FEMİNİST MALEDİLİŞİ OLANAKLI MIDIR?

Öz: Kant'ın rasyonalite anlayışının temelinde yerleştiği öznenin eril, batılı ve üst/orta sınıfa ait bir özne olduğu feminist kuramcılar tarafından Kant felsefesine yöneltilen temel suçlamalardan biridir. Aslında genel olarak ana akım Batı felsefesi ve özel olarak da Kant felsefesi için bu iddiayı destekleyecek çok sayıda kanıt vardır. Diğer yandan felsefe tarihi ile hesaplaşırken, felsefi kavram ve kategorilerden tam bir kopuşun mümkün olup olmadığı da ayrı bir tartışma konusudur. Bu makalede Kant felsefesini liberal feminizmin talepleriyle ve kapsayıcı bir

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Duva Kaya, Ö. (2022). Would A Feminist Appropriation of the Kantian Thought Be Possible?. *Kilikya Felsefe Dergisi*, (1), 110-126.

demokratik katılım ilkesi ile uzlaştırabilecek çeşitli imkanlar üzerinde durmaya çalışıyorum. Özellikle otonomi ve kişilik kavramlarından yola çıkarak, Kant'ın eserlerindeki mizojinik söylemlerin göz ardı edilmesi yoluyla feminist taleplerle bağdaştırılabilecek yeni bir okuma yapmanın mümkün olup olmadığını tartışmaya açmak önemlidir. Günümüzde gelenekler, önyargılar, baskıcı yönetim biçimleri vb. pek çok unsur, kadınların özgür failer olarak ve otonom bir biçimde kamusal yaşamda yer almalarını, onların "hak statüsüne sahip özneler" olarak görülmelerini engellemektedir. Bu nedenle Kant'ın *otonomi*, *kişi olma*, *özgür eylemlerde bulunma koşullarına sahip olma* gibi kavramlarının feminist taleplerle ortak bir yanının olduğunu ileri sürüyorum.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kant, Otonomi, Kişilik, Feminizm, Çoğulculuk

1. Introduction

The nature of reflection on mainstream Western philosophy has rightly been criticised by several philosophers because the Western philosophical canon has a masculine way of thinking. Masculinity, which should be addressed as the intersection of racism, Eurocentrism, heterosexism, and sexism, is a topic that is not only discussed on the grounds of conjectural discourses but also by internalising a particular way of thinking. On the one hand, it needs to be discussed from many perspectives in the history of Western philosophy, but on the other hand, the exclusion and ignoring of women philosophers in the mainstream history of philosophy is a destructive practice of masculinity whose effects still continue. Thus, masculine discourse and hegemonic attitudes which we have witnessed throughout history of philosophy are related to the act of theorising, or even were being produced in it. In the history of philosophy, many philosophers, ideas, and systems have produced masculinity, and although feminist criticism points mostly to modern philosophy and its aftermath, it is clear that women have been excluded from the philosophical canon since Antiquity. Precisely, it is possible to naturalise this reality with the idea that establishing a philosophical system includes cultural codes and develops "borders", creating itself by distinguishing between an inside and outside the border; however, this is incomplete and inadequate. It is known that what makes history of philosophy possible and maintains it today is based on forgetting (or impelling others to forget) the thoughts in the periphery, glorifying the dominant and systemic one, and protecting it. Although it is known that women philosophers have shaped philosophy in their own way despite all the difficulties, and yet they were never acknowledged in the canon. Therefore, confronting the dilemma of the history of mainstream philosophy by referring to culture and its masculine character is insufficient, and many recent studies have criticised these inadequacies. These criticisms arise from the possibilities provided by philosophy and the reading of philosophers' ideas from different perspectives. They are sometimes generated as an idea or a contrary element within a philosopher's own thought, while sometimes being offered by a commentator who has deconstructed or reinterpreted the philosopher's thought. The main problem here has appeared as a dilemma: Either we will reject the theories in mainstream philosophy, and therefore the way of philosophising in these theories, or we will look for ways to extend the concepts and arguments of thinkers for new demands. When considering the views of philosophers, it is another discussion

topic on to what extent it is possible to reappropriate their concepts and foundations for feminist demands. However, rather than abandoning the mind, reconstruction of the positioning of the reason seems to be a more plausible solution. It is certainly valuable to criticise the status of reason, especially positioning it in Enlightenment thought in the "Age of Reason"; but "reconstruction" of reason is equally significant.

However, it may not always be easy to assert that criticism somehow finds its way. It is important to analyse with which concepts and categories does criticism operate. Just as it is also necessary to understand to which subjects the basic concepts of criticism are being applied and how they work in practice. As for Kant, one of the great thinkers of critical philosophy, it is open to question how to find a way to adjust his criticism into a gender issue and transform his concepts like autonomy, free will, and the faculty of reason that refer to all humanity.

2. Misogynism in Kant's Works

There are considerable criticisms that Kant's concepts of autonomy, rationality, free will, and free choices are misogynist and exclusive, although he did not use these concepts to signify any gender and thus, some feminists have tried to appropriate some of his concepts to feminist goals. Especially in his lecture notes and non-systematic works, Kant stated that women do not have a rational nature, at least in the same way as men:

Feminine virtue or lack of virtue is very different from masculine virtue or lack of virtue, not only in kind but also as regards incentive. – She should be patient; he must be tolerant. She is sensitive; he is sentimental. Man's economic activity consists in acquiring, women's [308] in saving. – The man is jealous when he loves; the woman is jealous even when she does not love, because every lover won by other women is one lost from her circle of admirers. – The man has his own taste, the woman makes herself the object of everyone's taste (Kant, 2006, p. 209).

Kant thinks that men and women differ from each other in nature and character; in this sense, he reinforces the hierarchical and binary opposition of Western metaphysics that characterised women as beautiful and men as sublime. Furthermore, he considers women as being morally deficient, despite having 'many sympathetic sensations and compassion' (Kant, 2003, p. 77). Women are not capable of thinking reasonably and acting freely whereas men are capable of taking moral responsibility and engaging in the public sphere. In regard to women lacking a "natural" prerequisite, they cannot even be a voting citizen. (Kant, 1989, p. 8:295) According to this, women are not really capable of reasoning and taking moral responsibility and, furthermore, not being capable of fully participating in public reason. In *Observations on The Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, he describes a "deeper" understanding and calls it as masculine (Kant, 2003, p. 88). He also introduces an offensive distinction between ordinary and intellectual women by saying that the latter probably have a beard (Kant, 2003, p. 70). All these discriminative divisions which reiterate that women are not active citizens, reflects misogynistic positions in Kant's statements and generates feminist critiques of both Kant's works and

the Enlightenment project.¹ By paying attention to sexist statements Kant can be seen as misogynist but it is difficult to assert that he maintains this attitude in his moral theory and the concept of practical reason. There is a tension between Kant's descriptions of women and the way he defines moral agents. Therefore, it becomes controversial whether women are included in the principles that Kant determined according to universal rational criteria or not. At the same time, the claim of objective validity in his philosophy becomes disputable. As Pauline Kleingeld stated:

In his moral theory, the characteristics he assigns to men, such as courage, appear as the virtues of human beings. These are qualities that—he there claims—all human beings ought to strive to realise fully and in a morally appropriate way. The female characteristics do not appear to mark potential human excellences, however, and what Kant calls “feminine virtue” is not moral virtue in the strict sense of his ethics” (Kleingeld, 2019, p. 6).

On the other hand, if Kant's ethical formulations are based on the concept of “humanity” rather than men or women, it is possible to reconcile the formality of his philosophy with pluralist demands in the contemporary world. This, of course, is compatible with his ideal of a cosmopolitan society. There is a similar tension here. While Kant places non-European, people of colour and Eastern societies on a hierarchical value scale, he also embodies the theoretical foundations of his critical philosophy in the ideal of a cosmopolitan society. If it is eliminated the stereotypical prejudices that he repeated by referring to the generally accepted expressions of his era, solutions can be developed that will further expand the concept of “humanity”. It can also apply the generalising logic of the categorical imperative to the rationality which is the basis of his philosophy. Thus, placing his thought in feminist demands becomes possible despite the fact that he does not accept women as fully rational agents. I think that this possibility itself is hidden in his philosophical thought.

Another problem arises here: while appropriating Kant's philosophy for feminism, do we reproduce masculinity within feminism? Because reason has masculine connotations both in everyday use and theoretical use in Kant's discourse, it becomes controversial to develop an alternative theory by remaining within this concept of reason. Considering

¹ Although it is an important point whether Kant's pre-critical works should be evaluated separately from his critical philosophy, the main effects of his anthropology on critical philosophy are taken into account in this study. Associating the ideal for active, public life with the male gender Kant presupposes the public use of the reason with the male subject. Using oppositional concepts in the traditional manner for the exclusion and oppression of “lower classes”, non-western people and women is deeply reinforced in western culture and mainstream philosophical traditions. If it is accepted that Kant's early works constitute the core of his philosophy, it can be claimed that his universalism and transcendental method do not contain empirical elements, but cover these elements with a traditional postulate. Therefore, it should be noted that a gender-neutral language of the critical philosophy cannot guarantee disengagement from a gendered conception of reason (See Lloyd 1984, Plumwood, 1993).

that Kant is one of the major figures of the canon of western philosophy, the theoretical/masculine grounds of the reason in his theory maintains the traditional divisions and results in a value dualism and logic of domination. It is widely accepted by feminist theorists that the concept of reason in western metaphysics has been defined by masculine codes within the system of oppositions that have existed since the Pythagoreans. In western discourse, reason and nature (emotion, body and the other empirical elements of the world) are exclusive disjunctions and the categories of reason have also a symbolic duality that refers to hierarchical thinking (Lloyd, 1984). As a result of this way of thinking, *western, white, male* subjects, who are seen as representatives of the mind, and *women, people of colour, indigenous peoples and all subordinated ones* placed in the field of nature are addressed within the hierarchical structure of this dualism. As Kant himself claimed in *Anthropology and Physical Geography Lectures*, (Kant, *Natural Science*, 2012), *Observations on the Feeling and Beautiful* (Kant, 2003), and in many other writings that women, people of colour, and non-European societies don't have the ability to think, or that they are inferior to European societies, adapting his critical thought to feminist thinking or democratic pluralism becomes difficult. More generally, it is a crucial question whether the universal conceptions of humanity can shed light for the sake of pluralistic goals or not? I think the basic concepts of his critical philosophy and various conclusions can still be revisited on behalf of pluralism and democracy.

Primarily, Kant formulated the idea that the ability to perform moral actions rationally was something peculiar to all human beings. In other words, being is included in the category of "human", regardless of race, gender, or cultural differences, and it provides the basic condition for carrying out the task of morality. By developing the Enlightenment project, he preferred a more general and universal understanding of "human" against the specific "citizen" conception, namely the subject of a particular culture, against those who acted from culturalist perspectives, such as Moses Mendelssohn, and the views that later would form the basis of the German Romantic movement. This feature of Kant's thought has attracted philosophers who aim at pluralism and democratic participation in contemporary political philosophy. The Enlightenment universalism, which Kant defended against the culturalist reception of the Enlightenment thought, has been considered a starting point for achieving an inclusive justice in contemporary debates. Therefore, pluralism is generally considered a product of human reason in such interpretations; especially in John Rawls's thought. Rawls's conception of "justice as fairness" depends on his "Kantian interpretation" of the self and is related to the notions of autonomy, proceduralism, and constructivism even if there's nothing transcendental in a Rawlsian person. He addresses humanity in *Theory of Justice*, and reinterprets the word in the sense of a certain attitude indicative of amoral character (Rawls 1999, p. 428-9). Transforming Kant's philosophy in the name of plurality is more than an extension of his ethical and anthropological analysis. In *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798) Kant examines the concept of pluralism, by which he means a state of mind, namely as the mature use of reason. In this state the self understands that practical egoism doesn't give the "whole of World" and learns how to convert psychological dispositions to "pluralism":

The opposite of egoism can only be pluralism, that is, the way of thinking in which one is not concerned with oneself as the whole world, but rather regards and conducts oneself as a mere citizen of the world. – This much belongs to anthropology (Kant, 2006, p. 18).

Thus, it is thought that a broadscale discussion of justice can be promoted with the idea of pluralism and a public sphere in which all subjects are included, and Kant's understanding of the human being based on the Enlightenment is considered as inclusive despite the discriminatory discourses and expressions in his various works. However, due to the discriminatory expressions in Kant's philosophy even if all these expressions regarded as cyclical words - it is a considered controversial issue whether the aims of his practical philosophy include all people. Thus, the whole of Kant's critical philosophy, his political concepts including world citizenship and Enlightenment ideals, receive their share of these criticisms. Eze C. asserts that cosmopolitanism is a camouflage of European conservatism and alleged universal cosmopolitanism is fundamentally an imperial design (Eze C., 1997).

Generally Kant's lectures and writings on anthropology and physical geography are ignored in Kantian studies but they provide a detailed account of a racialized human nature classified into four categories—white Europeans, yellow Asians, black Africans, red Amerindians—who are related to one another in a hierarchy of superiors and inferiors. Besides alerting us to the value of these texts, Eze points out that while Kant talks about the importance of treating all persons with respect, outlining the responsibilities of the state, explaining his cosmopolitan ideals, etc. he actually is not undertaking a race-neutral and racially-inclusive position. According to Eze, Kant is really referring to the white population. Feminist theorists attach women to this, in parallel with these arguments, they also talk about the situation of women. Therefore, as Eze points out, if the answer given to the last one of the four questions of philosophy in Kant is the backbone of Kant's philosophy, it is clear that the answer to the question of what is man will be a question that determines his entire critical philosophy: “1. What can I know? 2. What ought I to do? 3. What may I hope? And 4. What is man? When considering the traditional Kant comments, it can be said that Kant segregates human (white) persons, from (non-white) sub-persons, with the defects of his exaggerated universalism also contributing to misogyny.

In particular, the statements in the section "The Character of the Sexes" of *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (2006) led to the thought that a male subject was at the heart of his critical philosophy. With his notion of “characterization”, Kant introduced a deeply problematic division between men and women. While he was asserting the singular unity of human nature on the one hand, on the other he defined empirical differences of character, such as person, gender, nationality (Volk), and race. It is quite interesting that Kant, while aiming to reach a universal concept of human nature, based the differences between men and women on the idea that they have a naturally given character:

“In all machines that are supposed to accomplish with little power just as much as those with great power, art must be put in. Consequently, one can already assume

that the provision of nature put more art into the organisation of the female part than of the male; for it furnished the man with greater power than the woman to bring both into the most intimate physical union, which, in so far as they are nevertheless also rational beings, it orders to the end most important to it, the preservation of the species. Moreover, in this quality of theirs (as rational animals), it provided them with social inclinations to make their sexual companionship persist in a domestic union. Two persons convening at random is insufficient for the unity and indissolubility of a union; one partner must yield to the other, and, in turn, one must be superior to the other in some way, to be able to rule over or govern him. For in the equality of claims of two people who cannot do without each other, self-love produces nothing but squabbling. In the progress of culture, each partner must be superior in a different way: the man must be superior to the woman through his physical power and courage, while the woman must be superior to the man through her natural talent for mastering his desire for her; on the other hand in still uncivilised conditions superiority is simply on the side of the man (...). Feminine ways are called weaknesses. One jokes about them; fools ridicule them, but reasonable people see very well that they are just the levers women use for governing men and using them for their own purposes" (Kant, 2006, pp. 205-206).

In the light of these statements, women apparently defined as creatures who are acting from inclinations. Consequently, women are defined as 'incapable of rational thought' (Antony, 1998: 63-4; Mendus, 1992: 180) and morally deficient. Despite its universality, it is thought that Kant's moral theory fails to apply to women and gender-neutral language in his works like the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals* is seen as deceptive. Robin May Schott points out that in Kant's view, a woman's lack of self-determination is intrinsic to her nature (Schott, 1997, p. 323). Apparently, Kant characterises both men and women as rational beings but he claims that nature has provided the man with greater strength than the woman (Kant, 2006, p: 205). Pauline Kleingeld argues that, although Kant apparently claims that both men and women are capable of rationality, he still believes that women fail to use reason properly due to some deficiencies in women's natural dignity. It would seem that women remain incapable of acting morally (Kleingeld 1993, p. 142). It is possible to find this kind of explanation with many similar misogynistic and discriminatory statements in Kant's *Anthropology*. In addition to his discriminative discourse in *Anthropology* (Kant, 2006), the other reason for the enduring scepticism towards Kant's philosophy is also relevant to his deep conviction that morality is understood in terms of universality. At this point, it is difficult to imagine that Kant's universal categories address all humanity.

However, it can be said that all these discriminatory discourses do not reflect the whole of his critical philosophy. Nevertheless, it is difficult to find feminist demands within a Kantian philosophical framework without facing a series of general and more specific interpretive and compelling philosophical questions. For these and similar reasons the discussion on the possibilities of Kantian concepts and a certain degree of skepticism is maintained by feminist thinkers. In new studies on this subject, some Kantian philosophers like Carol Hay, Jordan Pascoe, Holly Wilson, and Helga Varden want to develop a feminist perspective through the possibilities and reinterpretation of Kant's philosophy, while some Hobbesian, Hegelian, or even Aristotelian thinkers like Martha

Nussbaum, view Kant as a misogynist. Other commentators, like Dilek Hüseyinzadegan, instead of returning to an authentic Kantian reading to develop a feminist critique, try to demonstrate the methodological drawbacks of reproducing Kant's philosophy within feminism and discuss Kant's thought in a constructive collaboration for feminist purposes.

Performing a feminist appropriation of Kant requires the division between Kant's works and Kantian point of views. Concerning Kant's works in a feminist way depends on two purposes: 1- Expanding the extent of political concepts such as autonomy and citizenship to prevent the exclusion of women; and 2- If the first three questions of philosophy are reduced to the last question, "What is a human?" and if human refers only to men, then it will be necessary to include within this context. Including women in the human question is necessary both ontologically and practically, i.e., to entitle women as subjects and morally responsible citizens. Thus, some concepts of Kant's thought can be adopted in a positive way. For example Carol Hay uses the concept of "self-respect" (Hay, 2013), whereas Adrian Piper (Piper, 1997) embraces "rational selfhood" while Jean Rumsey attaches importance to "development of the character." (Rumsey, 1989) The main purpose of these positive appropriations is to align them to the feminist demand of "equal citizenship". However, there are two ways in which Kant's works can be mined for the benefit of feminism. The first way is to reveal the sexism in Kant's texts and by so doing changing philosophical attitudes; the other way is to embrace concepts such as personality, self-respect, autonomy and rational selfhood by transforming creatively Kant's texts in a way that was never anticipated by him and its goal is directed towards the recognition of women as subjects.

It can be asserted that both of these ways of reading Kant will be useful in transforming masculine identity and the masculine biases of the history of philosophy into pluralistic, more inclusive ones. The history of philosophy itself enables a creative re-reading of concepts in order to overcome the discriminatory discourse of philosophers. At the same time, there is some potential in philosophers' own thinking, even if they have never acknowledged it. For this reason, instead of continuing discussions on exclusionary statements and justifications, I intend to demonstrate how the concept of autonomy is still important today and can be transformed and used in the name of democratic pluralism. Despite all its problematic aspects, Kant's understanding of autonomy still plays an important role in realizing women's emancipation, the foundations of his philosophy can be reformulated by feminist critiques to overcome sexist impediments, and; it can develop the extent of democratic pluralism as well as provide inspiration for a more inclusive model of society. For this purpose, the possibility of finding a more fundamental anthropological framework that would eliminate all limitations in Kant's critical philosophy should also be reconsidered.

3. Autonomy, Personhood, and Pluralism

In Kantian terms, autonomy is defined as self-determination and includes the ability to shape our own lives. In this context, autonomy places priority over respect for persons; it celebrates the individual as a person who is an end in him/herself and who treats

others as ends in themselves. It means that particular desires are not of any particular moral importance conflict with the operation of the moral law. It is a common knowledge that while Kant characterises human beings (Menschen) in the theoretical and practical use of reason, in his moral and political philosophy the status of women is unclear. This is also evident in the thinking of the Enlightenment where women were not defined as individuals who can act autonomously and contribute with their capacities towards the good of humanity (Kleingeld, 1993, p. 135). If it is assumed or emphasised that women are not rational beings in Kant's formulation, then this means that they are not endowed with free will; that is, they are not the real agents of their actions and their actions can be entirely determined by external causes or instincts. Thus, women are treated as beings without intrinsic value or dignity. It must be admitted, then, that besides the passages describing the cognitive powers which is peculiar to all human beings² There are also statements by Kant that consider women as incomplete beings. However, in Kant's thought, different possibilities allow all citizens to be conceived as political actors and to design a public space in plurality. In the Kantian articulation of the concept of "autonomy" his motto "Sapare Aude!" can be reformulated in a political manner. Having courage to use her/his own reason is relevant to acting autonomously. Kant defines the principle of autonomy in which man "subject only to laws given by himself, but still universal and that he is bound only to act in conformity with his own will, which, however, in accordance with nature's end is a will giving universal law" (Kant, 1998, p. 4: 433). Autonomy is both an obligation and a responsibility in his thought. There is also an intrinsic connection between autonomy and personality in his practical philosophy. Personality develops through autonomy and adherence to universal law. Therefore having the capacity of self-determination transforms humans into a "person". Thus, human nature—and so personhood—gives priority to the autonomy that is at work in it and makes it personal to begin with. In the *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, Kant makes a strong claim in that unless a person acts autonomously, s/he acts as less than a fully human person. Although Kant thinks in the concept of abstract reason in mainstream philosophy, autonomy as "following one's own law" can be a starting point for the inclusion of women and subjects who are not included in the traditional understanding of reason in the public sphere. However, Kant himself has some irresolute and incomplete ideas about the perception of women as citizens. For example, Kant's definition of marriage in his later works considered as an indication that he may conceive of women as "citizens".

In the *Doctrine of Right*, marriage defined as "a lifelong union of two persons of different sexes". This union is formalised by a contract. Marriage involves equality of property and takes place when the partners "own each other as persons," not just dealing with wealth. Although this part of the Legal Doctrine often ridiculed, when it is seen as a legal review text, we can say that it somehow includes women in the rights system, in terms of being the subject of rights (Kant, 1991, p. 315). A person is a subject whose actions can be attributed to her/him. Thus, Kant assumes that the notion of "person" as a legal term

² In *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant stated that 'human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason' (Kant, 1998).

applies to both men and women, that is, common ground for entities that are both considered rational. It seems, then, that all members of the human species, including women, have some common grounds. His *Universal Principle of Right*, which is given in the "Introduction to the Doctrine of Right" of the *Metaphysics of Morals*, also states that "any action is right if it can coexist with everyone's freedom under universal law, or if on its maxim the freedom of choice of each can coexist with everyone's freedom following universal law" (Kant, 1991, p. 56). It is also possible to argue that, unlike feminist commentators such as Carol Pateman, Kant made women "subjects of right" by including them in the marriage contract that is, placing them in the status of right (Wilson, 2004). If it carefully examined in Kant's distinction between active and passive citizenship, it would be understood that he especially emphasises the lack of autonomy that hinders civil freedom. Considering that the main problem for Kant is the lack of autonomy, it can be understood that Kant basically considered the development of rational capacities in human beings as the only way for them to reach the status of right. Thus, every autonomous individual who can use their capacities can become the subject of the right. The inclusiveness of this possibility in Kant's thought can be expanded for all individuals who constitute a civil society, by removing its cyclical limitations.

On the other hand, it is necessary to refer to the possibilities in Kant's ethical approach. Kant's understanding of reason, unlike that of many philosophers, does not express an intuitive power. Therefore, the reason that comprehends and experiences ethical principles is the basis of the best practical reasoning for all people; this reason has a capacity that should be separated from a distant world of theological truth, Platonic forms, or Moore's indefinable values³. The maxims of the categorical imperative, while calling people to act under universal law, direct them to live together based on respect, not transforming diversity into unity, but a plurality. According to the requirements of practical reason, the existence of individuals who adhere to the universal law based on mutual respect is more important than the content of the law. Therefore, individuals may agree on reasonableness within competing or sometimes conflicting lifestyles. This formulation is puzzling in many respects, especially from a political point of view, but it is clear that this view is not particularly inclined to encourage dogmatism. Thus, it can be said that if Kant's moral philosophy is committed to a conception of reason that attempts to rule out the legitimacy of oppressive ways of life, it also requires respect towards as many different rivaling ways of life as possible. The development of an ethical ground, free from dogmatism, can motivate inclusive policies and enlarge public spaces for women or all subordinated individuals.

It is necessary to maintain a feminist orientation towards Kant's work that will both reveal the problems of masculine thought and revise the key concepts of his political philosophy. Redirecting focus to Kantian feminism in a comprehensive sense and pursue the question of the human being as an actor in life is crucial. The appropriation

³The objective moral values such as Plato's Form of the Good are the objects or products of reason, but they fail to motivate people to act; Moore, on the other hand, applies moral relativism to ethics and it is impossible in his understanding to gather under a common law. His view cannot also motivate people to take action (See Moore, 2002).

of Kantian terms to solve philosophical problems about gender justice generally doesn't depend on what might be called "authentic" readings of Kant's works. Despite the misogyny rooted in his writings, feminists trace those concepts, such as rights, autonomy, personhood or the ideal of justice that can be usefully deployed. The Kantian liberal notions of autonomy and self-respect offer an important ground to fight and undermine sexist oppression. A feminist commitment to autonomy can also provide both an emancipatory ideal for those who cope with systemic domination, and a useful basis for raising the philosophical issues surrounding women's identities. Extending the ideals of rationality and personhood presents "women's primary obligation to themselves as rational beings and that fulfilling the obligation requires resisting many of the conventional gender roles prescribed by gender society" (Hay, 2013, p. 119). At this point, this study is interested more in general points of Kant's philosophy that postulate personhood based on rational capacities which are the same for all people; his conception of critical reason and the Enlightened subject can develop feminist demands as well as produce new ways to extend the public realm by giving some steps for the cultivation of personhood. Women's agency is crucially important for social change and for overcoming traditional cultural norms as well as developing democracy, democratic institutions, and universal human rights and autonomy is a key concept here:

Autonomy plays an important role not only in feminism but also, more broadly, in ethical theory, applied ethics, political philosophy, and the philosophy of education. (...) Autonomy also supports such basic human values as dignity, respect, truthfulness, and moral responsibility: in the vein of Kant, mature and rational human beings are seen as free and responsible moral agents in virtue of our capacities to control ourselves through the exercise of our autonomous wills. (...) A principle of respect for autonomy also lies at the core of liberal democracies, and political philosophers often invoke autonomy in evaluating social and political principles and political power as well as in grounding individual rights or in criticising paternalistic policies or practices (Veltman and Piper, 2014, p.2).

Developing a pluralistic democracy needs liberal views of individual autonomy (as well as collective autonomy) for balancing equal rights. As many liberal feminists such as Wollstonecraft have pointed out, it is necessary for women to recuperate the realm of rationality and citizenship from which they were excluded as to achieve both equality and inclusion. Wollstonecraft thinks that women must "only bow to the authority of reason, instead of being the modest slaves of opinion" (Wollstonecraft, 1995, p. 119). If the ideal of an inclusive and pluralistic society is in question, the ideals of reason that exclude women need to be transformed. To make pluralism possible, with decisions taken autonomously, where reasonable decisions can be agreed upon, personality must be developed such that it makes free choices. At this point, it will probably be argued that Kant concealed the empirical conditions in the formation of personality under a false universalism mask; however, the advantage of his view can also be interpreted as that it unfolds human reality in a more complex way without compromising its commitment to the claim that the ultimate rationale for moral interaction is human freedom. In short, it can be asserted that the framework drawn by Kant includes more than an "floating signifier". As the subject of experience, all people have the capacity to re-establish

themselves in each of their actions and to guide their own actions. In Kant's thought, the stages of development of personality are established to include this possibility and the plurality of different experiences. The first step toward cultivating personhood is to think of oneself. Kant states that if people can think about who they are, or how they can gain the concept of "I," then they can become "persons". He asserts that personhood begins with self-criticism in his *Anthropology Lectures*:

The fact that the human being can have the "I" in his representations raises him infinitely above all other living beings on earth. Because of this, he is a person, and under the unity of consciousness through all changes that happen to him, the same person - i.e., through rank and dignity an entirely different being from things, such as irrational animals, with which one can do as one likes. This holds even when he cannot yet say "I," because he still has it in his thoughts, just as all languages must think it when they speak in the first person, even if they do not have a special word to express this concept of "I". For this faculty (namely to think) is understanding.

But it is noteworthy that the child who can already speak fairly fluently nevertheless first begins to talk by means of "I" fairly late (perhaps a year later); in the meantime, speaking of himself in the third person (Karl wants to eat, to walk, etc.) When he starts to speak by means of "I" light seems to dawn on him, as it were, and from that day on he never again returns to his former way of speaking. - Before he merely *felt* himself; now he *thinks* himself. The explanation of this phenomenon might be rather difficult for the anthropologist. The observation that a child neither expresses tears nor laughs until three months after his birth appears to be based on the development of certain ideas of offence and injustice, which point to the reason. - In this period he begins to follow with his eyes shining objects held before him, and this is the crude beginning of the progress of *perception* (apprehension of the ideas of sense), which enlarges to the *knowledge* of objects of sense, that is, of *experience* (Kant, 2006, pp.14,15).

Despite all the discriminatory aspects, *Anthropology* (2006) emphasizes the capacities associated with the essence of human beings, covering everyone for the development of personality in plurality. Every person, regardless of their gender or identity, goes through certain stages of development. It is evident that Kant assumes the same "process of becoming a person" for everyone by defining the developmental stages of childhood. Being able to call oneself "I" is about experience, and although experiences may differ, there are some foundations within experience that are common to all human species. It is consistent with his universal ethics. In his moral philosophy, "character" refers both to a person's moral "essence" and to experiences that manifest itself in humanity. For this reason, the other phase of becoming a person is conducting ethical actions and asking themselves "what ought I to do?" grounding critical reason. In *Metaphysics of Morals*, he highlights this as:

A person is a subject whose actions can be imputed to him. Moral personality is therefore nothing other than the freedom of a rational being under moral laws (whereas psychological personality is merely the ability to be conscious of one's identity in different conditions of one's existence). From this, it follows that a person is subject to no other laws than those he gives to himself (either alone or at least

along with others.) A thing is that to which nothing be imputed. Any object of free choice that itself lacks freedom is therefore called a thing (*res corporalis*) (Kant, 1991, p. 17, 6:224).

Kant also accomplishes these claims with the universalizing principles of the categorical imperative. Another aspect of personhood is political and in *Theory and Practice* Kant makes freedom the first of three principles:

1. The freedom of every member of the state as a human being.
2. The equality of each with every other as a subject.
3. The independence of every member of a commonwealth as a citizen (Kant, 1989, p. 74).

The inclusiveness of these expressions of Kant apparently contradicts his sexist expressions. However, on the other hand, it is possible to contextualise Kant's philosophy in a pragmatic way for the very reason of this contradiction. Considering the practical goals of the critical project with these items, it becomes possible to attach feminist demands to the Kantian analysis in the name of pluralism. There is a juxtaposition between Kantian terms of personhood/citizenship and feminist demands. Both of them challenge all the structures which destroy an autonomous personality. Kant's formulation of the personality is intrinsically bounded with humanity and human dignity because he considers humanity as an end in itself possessing rational capacities for all people. Kant celebrates the human capacity for rational agency and autonomous legislation. Any person who is morally responsible with governing themselves, can explore universally valid norms. This can be possible by equal participation in a common public debate with others. Personhood can only be possible within a framework of legality where others are equally involved. There is a strong objection to external and compelling laws or given beliefs. To reckon with all these, a philosophical perspective based on autonomy and individual freedom is required.

Kant's doctrine of right, which creates the conditions of possibility for living together in a multicultural society, can be useful for women as well as all other subjects excluded from the public sphere due to their beliefs or views. Therefore, in Kant's critical project, the emphasis on personhood and its political meaning should be analysed in a broader sense. His emphasis on the duty to the self, and in particular the duty of self-respect highlights the inner law of individuals against obedience to traditional norms. Kant's notion of autonomy still provides a useful basis for questioning tradition, prejudices and established beliefs. In the face of the coercion of externality, the moral subject has the possibility to find the strength to escape from these traditional norms and prejudices. Kant also characterises natural capacities of humans under moral principles, but these need to be developed before they are expressed in moral actions. While the capacity to act rationally is innate, natural capacities can gradually develop and become mature. Nature, tradition, or determination are obstacles to the use of these capacities and free choice. As becoming free agents, people must enlighten and escape from the constraints of nature and of tradition. In that case, a person must take actions that make her/his agent

in life. Therefore, there are considerable appropriations of the “agency” based on “autonomous subject” in the feminist canon. Principally demands for freedom and equality reconcile the definition of the Kantian *personhood*. The feminist thinker Carol Hay states that the main concepts of the Enlightenment philosophy can be a starting point for feminists who defend women's liberation against external pressures:

Someone who is oppressed should stick up for herself, you might think, because, by acquiescing in her oppression, she is behaving in a way that is wrong regardless of how others are affected. The claim that women have special obligations to themselves under oppression that are in some way obligations to the self is not unprecedented in the feminist canon. Mary Wollstonecraft, one of feminism's early writers, argued that women ought not to abide by conventional social mores that valued them solely for their beauty and charm. Following the heels of the Enlightenment, Wollstonecraft extended the ideals of rationality and individualism to women. She argued that women's primary obligation is to themselves as rational beings and that fulfilling the obligation requires resisting many of the conventional gender roles prescribed by genteel society (Hay, 2013, p. 119).

Mary Wollstonecraft's insistence on this subject among the demands of other feminist thinkers is inspiring. The courage to resist, as a rational agent, against oppression and the use of one's mind is the initial proposition of all feminists. For this reason, it can be claimed that there is an intersection between the Kantian concepts of “autonomy”, “freedom”, “moral agent” and (liberal) feminism. As Sandrine Bergès claims:

Although we do not know that Wollstonecraft had read ‘What is enlightenment?’, she was almost certainly familiar with Kantian political thought. Kant was not formally studied in England until the early nineteenth century – but what was taught in universities was hardly relevant either to Wollstonecraft or to her radical Dissenter friends, who were not allowed to study there. On the other hand, the *Analytical Review*, the radical journal started by Johnson and Christie in 1788, to which Wollstonecraft was a frequent contributor, was linked with the *Allgemeine Literatur Zeitung*, a similar journal from Jena, which published many articles on Kantian philosophy (Bergès, 2013, p. 36).

For Bergès if Wollstonecraft had been more familiar with Kant's political ideas of personality and civil society, then it might have been easier for her to make sense of and philosophically contextualise some of her own thoughts and arguments (Bergès, 2013,p.36). There is a rapprochement between Kant's concept of personality and liberal feminism in terms of the intersectionality. Both of them involve the demand to be freed from the bondage of tradition and seek the possibility of intersubjectivity. Therefore, both are essential for the establishment of a pluralistic society. By framing the principle of *personhood* within the public space in which people act freely, principles of justice will become “acceptable to everyone”. There always will be some obstacles in the way of realising this. Conventional/traditional norms are consolidated with prejudices and without the critical use of reason, they cannot be discredited. In the light of these assignments, it can be understood why some feminists need Kant's concepts and a further analyses of them today. It is Kant's formalistic and critical philosophy that can

produce universal norms for all people besides women. This dimension of Kant's thinking makes him more relevant to us.

4. Conclusion

Revealing the masculine foundations in the history of mainstream philosophy and following the contributions of Kant's philosophy to contemporary problems is substantial. In this article, I tried to examine the possibility that Kantian philosophy offers to develop democratic pluralism with his emphasis on autonomy, intersubjectivity, and laws that can apply to everyone. It is a controversial issue whether the discriminatory expressions in Kant's works can express the whole of his philosophy. But by using some of the central concepts of his philosophy it becomes possible to seek solutions to contemporary problems. In addition, when the concepts of autonomy, free action, etc., are adopted by feminists and especially Enlightenment liberal feminists, the possibilities of a more inclusive world will be apparent with the removal of the contradictions between Kantian thought and feminist demands.

In this sense, it is necessary to distinguish between Kant's philosophy and Kantian feminism. Although inspired by Kant's analysis, the concepts of autonomy, personality and pluralism have different meanings within various feminist theories. In fact, Kant's works, especially in the pre-critical period, contain a number of sexist expressions. Despite all misogynist statements, Kant also has an idea in which he accepts women as the subjects of the right, even if it is defective and incomplete. Nevertheless, within the canon of western philosophy Kant's own statements and analysis share the trouble of mainstream philosophy and; needs to be reinterpreted. Feminist appropriations of Kantian concepts like autonomy open the door to new discussions for feminist demands through the transformation of concepts. Enlightenment liberal feminism, which was discussed in this article, was committed to the possibilities of Kant's practical philosophy in terms of the demands for equality, civil rights, anti-traditionalism and resistance to oppressive structures. Although Mary Wollstonecraft's thought was not directly related to Kant's philosophy, the philosophical problems she deals with overlap with Kant's notion of autonomy, freedom and plurality. The main subject of this article is not to evaluate the Enlightenment project or the Kantian foundations of a pluralistic democracy specifically but to stimulate an approach that requires human action under a universal law in accordance with the autonomy that can provide an inclusive pluralism. As Helga Varden stated in *Sex, Love and Gender: A Kantian Theory*, it is important to improve our inherited public legal-political institutions such that they guarantee and function consistently with the basic rights of women and sexual or gendered minorities and then strive towards a flourishing democracy first (Varden, 2020, p. 204) and develop politics directing us to act in plurality. This is not just a matter of representation or inclusion; it is also a matter of justice.

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