



MANHOOD and POLITICS

*A Feminist Reading
in Political Theory*

WENDY BROWN

New Feminist Perspectives



Manhood and Politics

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To the memory of my mother

Contents

<i>Preface</i>	ix
1 Introduction: Politics, Manhood, and Political Theory	1
Ancient Greece: Arendt and Aristotle	
2 Arendt: The Fragility of Politics	23
3 Aristotle: The Highest Good for Man	32
4 The Greek Body: All-Too-Human and Super-Human	53
Renaissance Italy: Machiavelli	
5 Machiavelli: From Man to Manhood	71
6 Machiavelli: Manhood and the Political World	96
Modernity: Weber	
7 Weber: The Nature and Telos of Politics	127
8 Weber: Political Rationality and Political Institutions	152
Toward a Post-Masculinist Politics	
9 What is to Be Overcome: The Politics of Domination	179
10 What is to Be Done: Toward a Post-Masculinist Politics	189
<i>Bibliography</i>	215
<i>Index</i>	225

Preface

THIS IS A FEMINIST BOOK about political theory, but it is not a book about women. In the introduction to *Reflections on Gender and Science*, Evelyn Fox Keller remarks, "the widespread assumption that a study of gender and science could only be a study of women still amazes me: if women are made rather than born, then surely the same is true of men. It is also true of science."¹ It is also true of politics and political theory. Everything in the human world is a construct—upon this, most students of the humanities would agree today. Everything in the human world is a gendered construction—upon this, feminist scholars have been insisting for the last decade and this book is another strand of that insistence. Political theory, a genre of theory concerned with Western history's most exclusively masculine purview, is fairly saturated with various modalities of masculinity. The classic works in political theory do not simply narrate the historical exclusion of women from politics and the relegation of women to subordinate spheres and statuses, they also comprise a rich articulation of masculinist public power, order, freedom, and justice.

For those who have followed closely the extension of feminist criticism into every crevice of every discipline over the last decade, the idea of a feminist inquiry that is not primarily concerned with women is easy enough to grasp. But for those relatively unversed in contemporary feminist thought, the idea may seem incoherent. Colleagues who learned that I was working on a feminist study of manhood and politics often heard *only* the word "feminist" and assumed that I was working on "the woman question"—women in politics, women in political theory, or women as political thinkers. One referee for the book cited Susan Okin's *Women in Western Political Thought* as its "nearest competitor," a work for which I have the highest esteem but as its title makes clear, is about women, not men

1. Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 3.

or manhood in Western political thought. A feminist book concerned with politics and political theory that did not have women as its primary focus could not be fathomed—no receptors existed for it inside a worldview in which feminism is about women while everything else is human, that is, male, that is, human.

This kind of deafness has a vitally political edge, indeed precisely the edge with which this book is concerned. Consider again Evelyn Fox Keller's amazement at those who are uncomprehending about the reach of gender analysis into the construction of science itself—is this incomprehension really so amazing? Like antiracist campaigns that are kept within the bounds of minority civil rights, feminism limited to women's issues, whether women's literature or women's rights, can be accepted by those outside these bounds without seeming to challenge or indict their existence. Feminism construed as solely concerned with women can be variously endorsed, coopted, tolerated, or marginalized by nonfeminist men without much trouble or trauma to themselves precisely because it is not their issue. Such feminism can be "added in" to curriculum, nodded to in lectures, given its own panels at academic conferences, permitted to caucus in professional organizations, requested in job candidates, and converted into Title IX statistics. Such feminism is not seen as having anything to do with men save for the occasional affirmative action conflict over scarce positions or the odd dishwashing squabble when everyone in the family is tired.

The importance of bringing feminist angles of vision to domains other than those explicitly occupied by women goes beyond the ways it renders more difficult the practice of marginalizing or coopting feminism. "Second wave" feminist scholarship has travelled an enormous distance since its beginnings two decades ago and the course of these travels has been marked by two major shifts of emphasis. The first entailed a move from documenting the omission or outrageous depictions of women in traditional scholarship to the trenchwork of redressing these omissions and depictions. Legions of feminist scholars undertook the task of recovering our history and literature as well as painstakingly ferretting out the misogyny and myths in the accepted histories. In the course of this work, "woman" also became women—specifically constructed creatures of particular races, classes, epochs, and cultures rather than figments of the "eternal feminine" or its modern, white, middle-class variant. The second shift entailed a move from recovering ourselves to critically examining the world from the perspective of this recovery—developing critiques of the gendered quality of our inherited discourses, disciplines, institutions, and practices. Together these changes represent a move from margin to center (and one that could have only happened

in this order), from a focus upon women's experience in the margins to an analysis of the world that produced that experience. Through this move, feminist scholarship is throwing off a designation as interest group advocate and is becoming citizen, in the deepest, fullest sense of the term. Increasingly, we have something to say about the methodologies and epistemologies informing every disciplinary niche—from primatology to bureaucracy, biology to representation, sexology to moral theory. Naturally, there are many who would like to return us to the ghetto. Some, like Allan Bloom in his new bestseller, *The Closing of the American Mind*, are explicit about this wish; others are the people Keller is amazed by, those who simply "cannot imagine" gender as an issue for any but women.²

In addition to being a move from margin to center, the contemporary feminist focus upon the socially male constructions of various disciplines, discourses, and institutions helps to make good on a fine old injunction to theory "not simply to interpret the world but to change it." For as we attack these constructions and map ways to transform these disciplines, discourses, and institutions, we are striking at the jugular of male dominance. We are also joining feminism to the difficult task of imagining and sketching alternatives to the existing orders of knowledge and power, a sign that we now feel ourselves to be enough a part of history to take responsibility for the future.

This book is written in several different voices, a phenomenon shaped in part by the texts under consideration and in part by my own multiple political and scholarly commitments. With regard to the texts, I am easily influenced by others' moods and styles; hence, the chapters on Machiavelli are allusive and playful while the chapters on Weber are sober, straightforward, and depressing. This was not intentional and such "merging" with a text is certainly a questionable virtue; indeed, there is something distinctly gendered about it, but a raised consciousness is not the same thing as a revolutionized psyche. With regard to the multiple commitments, I say here only what every scholar with fierce political cares has probably experienced. At times I am transfixed by the artful genius of the classical political theorists. This was the intellectual aesthetic that attracted me to political philosophy in the first place; not the politics but the magnificence of Plato drew me in. At other times I am moved by the urgent demands of a world rife with troubles and injustices, including but not only those perpetrated by masculine dominance, and at such moments, attention to textual nuance and interpretative subtlety may

2. Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987).

give way to anger and impatience at the practices dignified and justified by the canonical texts in political theory. Of course, there is a self turning against a self here; strands of a life strung in high tension with each other are warring in a manner Plato called symptomatic of a "disordered soul" but which he also used to characterize the anarchist stage of democracy, a stage I always thought he judged a bit harshly.

The devotee of political philosophy and the impatient citizen are not the only factions making an appearance on these pages. There are times when men—their airs, antics and institutions—appear nothing short of ridiculous to me, times when I am inclined mainly to parody their lofty theoretical utterances and self-descriptions. At other times, I am thoroughly fascinated by the tensions and contradictions contained in the constructions and imperatives of manhood, and I am perfectly content to poke about in these complexities. But there are other times when the devastating consequences of masculine dominance, rather than its absurdity or internal tensions, are before my eyes and at these moments, when the sanity and survival of women and the world appears to be at stake, a fierce, even angry voice emerges. This particular multiplicity of voices, of course, is one that appears in feminism itself as an opposition between characterizations of women as powerful, albeit undervalued, social actors, and women as subjected and victimized. The truth is that we are both, just as masculine dominance has both its utterly laughable and utterly horrifying moments. A feminism which abjures either dimension will fail to capture the range of women's experience in its analysis and the range of women in its ranks.

The different voices in this book, then, appear not as a literary device but because they are all inescapably present in a political, feminist student of political theory and the world. Happily, at least a portion of the women's movement is learning to let such multiple voices emerge without hushing, hierarchalizing, or even typologizing them and at the same time, without surrendering to ethical relativism. We are learning, sometimes with great awkwardness, to be not simply tolerant but genuinely democratic *and* discriminating about difference and about identities that are fractured, fluid, and plural. Perhaps political theory will someday follow suit.

I have many people to thank for their companionship to this project. When it was a dissertation, I was privileged to work with Sheldon Wolin, whose rigorous intellect, subtle readings of texts, and complex political values taught me what to reach for. For their encouragement, teaching, and critical readings of parts or all of the thesis, thanks are also due to Michael Brint, Linda Fitzgerald, Amy

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During the years when teaching and other obligations rendered the dissertation-to-book transition an erratic affair, I was sustained by many others. For tending my spirit, engaging my work, or inciting me with their own, I am especially indebted to Lila Abu-Lughod, Tim Cook, Peter Euben, Gail Hershatter, Michael MacDonald, Polly Marshall, Joshua Miller, Carol Ockman, Wendy Strimling, Rosemarie Tong, and Elisabeth Vogel. Francine Davis, my research assistant at Williams College, worked cheerfully on tedious details; the College itself was generous with both time and money for completion of the manuscript. And unfailing in their good humor and support has been my family: Elizabeth and Donald Fennelley, Francis Kalnay, and the Browns—Cecil, Dick, Greg and Roger.

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1

Introduction: Politics, Manhood, and Political Theory

I

FOR MOST OF WESTERN HISTORY, the expectations, sensibilities, and life activities of human beings have been divided into two, generally contraposed orders: male and female. While associated with the natural phenomenon of human physiological difference, this division has been a conventional, humanly-constructed one. Simply in view of the variety of its historical and cultural permutations, it cannot be called natural, inevitable, or biologically determined. Gender is a human affair, a protean arrangement of meanings, values, and activities born of human mind and endeavor, yet so thoroughly “naturalized” over time that the constructed character of the arrangement has been lost upon most of Western history’s inhabitants.

With a few notable exceptions, the situation of women and the ideological antimony between female and male have been uninterrogated and unchallenged by even the most radical thinkers of any previous epoch. Yet, in a span of less than two decades, these matters have been the subject of one of the most remarkable revolutions in the history of human consciousness. At the level of ideas and attitudes as well as location and action in the world, “what a woman is” has been thrown into question. No longer are women everywhere assumed to harbor specific virtues, vices, mental or physical limitations. No longer are we universally regarded as the necessary and sole bearers of a particular kind of work—child-raising and family making.¹ Women are more in the public world, the heretofore male world, than at any previous moment in history. We are engaged in

vocations and activities never before conceived as appropriate to us or within our capacities.

For conservative or reactionary students of history and society, these developments appear as the inevitable outcome of the unraveling of Western civilization, symptomatic of a general disintegration of morals, social boundaries, family, and authority. For the moderate or resigned, they may be explained by a Tocquevillian perspective on liberalism: the dynamic of liberal egalitarianism steadily dilutes and diminishes all significant distinctions between members of society. And for liberals of the optimistic stripe, these developments epitomize the best in liberalism: ever-increasing opportunity for each individual to realize her or his potential and aspirations.

In fact, the recent, dramatic transformation in the status of women is far more "materialist" in origin than any of these popular accounts would suggest. By far, the most important factor eroding women's time-honored place in the Western world has been the transformation of the household realm accomplished by capitalist development. The rise of industrial manufacturing revolutionized the formal and material basis of the family and familial economy. The household as a primary productive unit began to diminish, especially in the nonagrarian sectors; commodification of labor on a mass scale gave rise to an increasingly atomized work structure in which the individual, rather than family or household, became paramount; landed property declined in importance relative to other forms of property ownership and use; and the roles of property and inheritance as the underpinnings of marriage for the middle and upper strata began to diminish. In short, capitalism in its adolescent years powerfully subverted the material basis of familial households and the confinement of women within them. This phenomenon has vastly accelerated since its origins in the 18th century as more and more household functions are commercialized and as capital (hence labor) continues to become more mobile. This is the material side of developments rendering women's traditional roles, activities, and identities increasingly superfluous and, concomitantly, more socially and psychologically hollow or suffocating.

A second and related development over the last three centuries has had enormous impact upon the ideological and structural situation of women. This is the emergence and dissemination of the liberal doctrines of universal equality, liberty, suffrage, and opportunity. In the formulations of the early liberals, "universal" excluded not only women but the nonpropertied masses. However, due to the abstract nature of these doctrines—their grounding in the *concept* of the individual rather than in the concrete content of an individual's life circumstances and endeavors, the exclusion of women and others

from basic civil and political rights had a blatantly illogical and untenable quality about it. Early feminists such as Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, and John Stuart Mill seized upon just this "contradiction" in liberal thought and practice: if citizenship and its attendant rights and opportunities are no longer conferred upon certain social strata or rooted in certain characteristics but redound to individuals irrespective of their socio-economic station, then women must be counted among these individuals. In short, 18th and 19th century struggles to extend the "rights of man" to the nonpropertied masses implicitly raised the question of the rights of women.² Within this discourse of enfranchisement, rights, and privileges lies the origins and perspective of what we know today as "liberal feminism." The limitations of this kind of "emancipation" should be immediately obvious: as rights, liberties, and opportunities within civil society are pursued and defended, the structural barriers to genuine freedom imposed by the organization of the economy, the family, and political power are ignored if not effectively buttressed and legitimated by the struggle to extend citizenship and opportunities to a previously disenfranchised group.³

In the United States in the 1960s, these very institutions and structures of power became the focus of popular political attack. Institutions and ideologies incompatible with genuine freedom, lurking beneath and within the doctrines of liberalism, were assailed by the civil rights movement, the antiwar movement, and a host of political and theoretical spin-offs from these movements. Yet, as the barriers to freedom and dignity for racial minorities, the poor, and the colonized in the Third World were challenged, the situation of women was at first ignored. This time, however, because so many women were involved in these struggles and because there was such a sharp irony in fighting for the freedom and dignity of those particularly marginalized by Western society while eschewing those things in the largest marginal group of all, the scattered cries of feminists through the centuries converged into a deafening roar. This, combined with the general liberalization of mores engendered by the "sexual revolution"; the repudiation of valueless careers and soulless families by middle class youth; and the recent experience of women cast *en masse* into the labor force during World War II only to be thrust back into the home a decade later, gave birth to a women's movement of proportions that took even those involved by surprise.

The scope and pace of the changes resulting from the "second wave" of the women's movement are almost impossible to grasp. This movement has dislodged social and ontological assumptions and transformed the lives of women and men to an extent probably unparalleled by any other social or political movement in history. Yet

contemporary political, social, cultural, and economic life is utterly infused with the history of an uninterrogated division between the spheres, activities, characteristics, and values associated with each gender. The historical division between men and women as well as the subjugation of women is inscribed in the history of political and social thought, arrangements, and institutions. We are the inheritors of a world literally divided into institutionalized conceptions and practices of "masculine" and "feminine." Thus, despite the fact that many have now come to reject or at least to question traditional notions and practices associated with women and men, we live in a world in which political, economic, and private realms are rooted in and shaped by these traditional arrangements and practices.⁴ As Marx reminds us, "the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Or in Freud's more succinct turn of phrase, "the dead are mighty rulers." The power of dead generations, of history, is even more forcibly present in the traditions and institutions of "masculine" and "feminine" spheres than in any single woman or man. Individual change, however difficult, is relatively accessible compared to what is involved in interrupting a social or political tradition, a form of activity, discourse, or intercourse. Traditions and institutions, humanly constructed yet by definition now separated from the hands and minds that gave them life, not only lack the capacity for self-transformation, they elude our attempts to alter them until we fully apprehend them, and the latter is tremendously difficult while living within them.

More than any other kind of human activity, *politics* has historically borne an explicitly masculine identity.⁵ It has been more exclusively limited to men than any other realm of endeavor and has been more intensely, self-consciously masculine than most other social practices. The extent to which both the theory and practice of politics has been bound up with protean yet persistent notions and practices of manhood is not limited to the origins of politics in "warrior leagues," nor to ancient beliefs about the realization of manhood through political life, nor to modern declarations about the "manliness" of political heroes and leaders. The historical relationship between constructions of manhood and constructions of politics emerges through and is traced upon formulations of political foundations, political order, citizenship, action, rationality, freedom and justice. What counts as political and what is excluded from politics, what is considered pernicious, threatening, or inappropriate to politics is also affected by this relationship. It is this relationship between manliness and politics, as it has been inscribed in traditional political theory, that this study seeks to lay bare, analyze critically, and ultimately press toward transformation.

II

The writings of Aristotle, Machiavelli and Weber are the specific focus of this work and an account of this selection is in order. To begin with, a study of these thinkers makes it possible to situate the inquiry within ancient, early modern, and contemporary periods of Western Civilization such that elements of longevity, continuity, and change in the manhood-politics relation can be explored. In fact, I argue that a thin, uneven line of development in the manhood-politics relation can be perceived in the course of Western history. This line begins with Plato's overthrow of his more "mystical" predecessors and his concomitant establishment of a specifically Western tradition of politics and thought. But it is Aristotle who most succinctly and unapologetically establishes politics as a distinctly male sphere and masculine activity. In Aristotle's political and ethical theory, we greet man's pursuit of a kind of freedom *against* natural necessity and the body, his concern with dominating these things, and his development of a political rationality to facilitate such domination.

By Machiavelli's time, these ideas and practices have been largely cut loose from their formally ethical foundations and give rise to a world in which power is quite starkly pursued for its own sake. Political rationality has grown more forthrightly instrumental, and the ends of politics pertain to a relatively narrow conception of political glory by comparison with the rich conception of the "good life" cherished by the ancient Greeks. For Machiavelli, woman, nature, and the "uncontrollable" are bound together in the guise of *fortuna* and are cast as the explicit antagonist of political men in search of political glory, freedom, and power.

By Weber's epoch in the late nineteenth century, with capitalism and the bureaucratic organization of political and social life firmly under way, the manhood-politics relation has reached an impasse, indeed a crisis that is part and parcel of a cultural and political crisis. This crisis has a double character. On the one hand, the quest for manhood as freedom from constraint, as domination of men and the environment, and as thought and action liberated from sensual and emotional aspects of being, results in a bureaucratic and capitalist machinery in which man is utterly ensnared, unfree, and by Weber's own account, inhuman. In the process of his quest for a particular (masculine) kind of freedom, man has built an "iron cage" that dominates and reduces him to a soulless automaton incapable of shaping his world, performing as a political or intellectual "hero," or exercising the liberty to which he has aspired. On the other hand, the crisis manifests itself politically: the manhood-politics dialectic has produced a political-economic order that appears out of control even

to those who supposedly control it and thoroughly dominates the human beings it was designed to liberate. It is commonplace and almost tedious to rehearse the ways in which we are today on the brink of economic, geopolitical, or ecological disasters and the helplessness with which these dangers are confronted even by those in power.

I am not suggesting that there are iron laws of development in the manhood-politics relation akin to either Marx's laws of economic development or Hegel's reason in history. Sustaining the argument at either the Marxian or the Hegelian levels would fly in the face of post-modern critiques of such views of history, critiques to which I am largely sympathetic. What I am arguing is that there is a definite if nonlinear and unspecifically determined process of historical development—a traceable genealogy—in the manhood-politics relation. And it is precisely because this development has reached or produced a point of crisis that the present work is possible and of immediate political relevance. A political crisis signals the crumbling or exhaustion of existing modes and practices and the need for alternative approaches to collective existence. That alternatives to prevalent ways of thinking about, organizing, and acting within our polities are in order is a matter upon which many Western intellectuals would easily agree. The argument that a specifically feminist approach to these fundamentals of human society is in order is grounded in the critical, interpretative chapters of this book.

The span of history covered by Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Weber is only one aspect of their place in this work of interpretation; there are other reasons for the choice of these particular thinkers. First, each is importantly "mainstream" within the tradition of political theory. That is, while each challenged certain prevailing ideas and practices of their times, none bears the radically critical posture toward their specific political and intellectual milieu that is the hallmark, for example, of Socrates, Rousseau, or Marx. All three theorists were committed "realists"; they sought to give theoretical coherence to the existing order of things and devoted themselves to working within its range of possibilities. Consequently, a focus upon Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Weber makes possible the qualified claim that something of an historical reality—an actual practice of politics and not just the turns of mind of particular thinkers—is represented in their thought.⁶

Second, in a study seeking to discern something new about the nature of politics in Western thought and practice, it is important to look to theorists who have a strong and full conception of politics—where it comes from, what its purpose and meaning is, how and why it should be cultivated or valued. (Ironically, this rules out a fair

number of "great" political theorists.) The politicalness of their times as well as of their thought made Aristotle, Machiavelli, and Weber appropriate choices in this regard. For it was not simply personal values that led these thinkers to place politics at the center of their worldly concerns, but the fact that they were inhabitants of particular epochs where political life enjoyed a centrality unknown, for example, in our own culture and times. This is especially so with Aristotle and Machiavelli. In Nietzsche's words:

Consider the Greeks. . . . Certainly history knows of no second instance of such an awful unchaining of the political passion, such an unconditional immolation of all other interests in the service of this political instinct; at best one might distinguish the men of the Renaissance in Italy with a similar title for like reasons and by way of comparison.⁷

Even within these intensely political times, there is an unusually strong concern with political life harbored by each of the theorists considered in this study. In diverse ways, each sought to assert the value and autonomy of politics as a unique and ennobling dimension of human existence. Aristotle pursued this aim in the intellectual context of antipolitical Platonist philosophy. Machiavelli championed power-politics and an invigorated, politicized citizenry amidst Italian cultural crisis as well as against the prevalence of Christian doctrines and Papal hegemony. Weber sought to redeem and reassert the value of political life in the face of modern forces of bureaucratic rationalization and against what he considered to be the antipolitical doctrines of pacifists, Marxists, and romantic idealists.

Thus, the nature, character, and meaning of politics is accentuated by these theorists by virtue of both their historical context and their particular passions and aims. Besides its usefulness for this work, this also means that each puts forth understandings of politics that are not to be lightly dismissed, even as they are subjected to critical scrutiny. For each comes to terms with their political milieu and formulates the project, purpose, and possibilities of politics in ways that are profoundly important, especially given the status and condition of politics in our own age. Thus, from each we can learn not only what is wrong with politics rooted in a masculine tradition but what is compelling about it such that it calls for transformation rather than thoroughgoing condemnation or abolition. That each of these thinkers subverted the inspiring or even liberating aspects of their political formulations is partly related to the fact that these formulations were bound to an ethos of manhood.

A brief preview of the self-subverting aspects of the work of these theorists will illuminate part of the strategy of this study. Aristotle is distinguished by his doctrine that a life lived in freedom and collec-

tive deliberation with others is the ultimate good for human beings. For him, political life was the expression of a noble, complete human existence. Another aspect of Aristotle's perspicuity lies in his recognition of the variety of activities and relationships constitutive of human existence. Aristotle grasped our multifaceted character as reproducers, producers, thinkers, actors, friends, citizens, and lovers and recognized that each of these are ineluctable elements of being human. Moreover, he knew that all of these elements of our being, as they manifest themselves in various relationships and associations, must be articulated and explored in any comprehensive political theory. But Aristotle subverts his own rich understanding of what it means to be human in his effort to structure individual and collective existence according to a hierarchy of values in which manhood, defined in a narrow and alienated fashion, is at the top. He thwarts his own insight into our multiplicitous nature with his project of devaluing and diminishing all those elements of life that are not, by his definition, manly. Aristotle, renowned as the political theorist who recognized that the human being is a natural being and is but one small part of an intricate cosmological order, savaged this important perception as he cast humanity in the terms of an elite group of males estranged from and seeking to dominate nature, bodies, and the majority of the human population. Similarly, his establishment of politics as the consociation of free and equal citizens who deliberate together about who they are and what should be undertaken by and for them is distorted by a formulation of freedom defined by male domination of women, necessity, and the body. Moreover, this formulation of freedom is one that ultimately makes incoherent the value Aristotle seeks to ascribe to politics and political activity themselves.

Machiavelli presents a similar picture. On two very crucial issues, he stands as a powerful critic of much of the political theory that comes both before and after him. First, he pulled the human body back into politics and, in the same sweep, revealed the hollowness of political philosophizing that forgets, denies, or repudiates the body. Second, Machiavelli approaches political theory with a willingness to bear, even celebrate, the enormously complex web of agents, actions, and perceptions that make up the world of human and political life. If he had a single message for those who engage in politics, it is that everything alive or moving is a part of the political world and that one must at all times act according to this knowledge. The political actor must not only cast his eyes widely but must recognize how much of the political realm is a matter of perception and the organization of "appearances." Machiavelli also perceived the futility of fixed methods, purposes, and rules for politics. He viewed human life as

historically conditioned and changing, and located the value of politics within this history and flux, not in some external, metaphysical, or spiritual source. The effective political actor attends closely to context in order to draw forth new possibilities; his concerns, techniques and visions cannot issue from an external book of ideals or strategies.

But if Aristotle subverts his extraordinary insights through the masculine content he gives them, how much more extreme is this tendency in Machiavelli's thought. For the body that gains *entrée* in Machiavellian politics is without qualification a male, extremely "macho" one. This body ceaselessly seeks power over others, beats, rapes, displays, unfeelingly seduces and plunders. This body also reveals only its dominating and driven aspect and keeps in the shadows all that sustains it, all that it wants, needs, and offers aside from its passion for domination. Moreover, even as Machiavelli witnesses the complex web of forces and perceptions constituting the political world, he entreats political actors to overcome and deny this multiplicity, to proceed singly and boldly, to impose their own purposes and forms upon what is alive and ever in motion. He advises striving for maximum control over context, while his attunement to the extent to which context is uncontrollable suggests both the danger and the inappropriateness of such an approach. His scepticism about the possibility that human beings could work within context in such a way as to simultaneously respect and develop this context pertains to the limitations of character in the politically virile men he studied and admired. Manhood is Machiavelli's beacon and his downfall.

If Machiavelli's work is the most extreme version of the self-subversion in masculinist political theory, certainly the case of Max Weber offers the greatest pathos. One need not perform elaborate hermeneutical feats to see that Weber decried and dreaded in one gesture what he bore to life and power with another. He abhorred the massive system of domination and rationalization capsulating man's quest for power as domination, freedom as control, sensient being as rational mind. But Weber also stood by these things, encoded and empowered them, embodied and strove for them, demanded our allegiance to them. Weber even spies the contradictory nature of man's quest for domination on its own rocky shoal: in his studies of economy and society, bureaucracy and power, he recognizes that the particular nature of Western man's reach for freedom and power has bred man's own enslavement and powerlessness, in addition to the inordinate oppression of others. The tragedy lies not only in Weber's controversion of his own understandings through his ultimate attachment to manly quests, deeds, and monuments, but in the way it was

borne inwardly by Max Weber, the man. The contradictory dimensions of his work and cares literally crushed and paralyzed him and he could not heal himself. He—his fidelity to manhood—was his own poison.

III

In addition to an understanding of why particular theorists have been chosen for this work, the reader may want to know how this project differs from other "feminist critiques" of political theory. To begin with, I am less engaged in a critique than in a rereading of past political theories for the light they shed upon a newly discovered problem. Moreover, while the problem I am addressing issues from a feminist angle of vision, it does not deal solely nor even centrally with women. Most definitions of feminism, and most feminist theory and practice, tend to focus upon the denigration of women, the heretofore hidden or devalued sphere of women's work, or the exclusion of women from male arenas of achievement, remuneration, and recognition. This is as much the case with feminist treatments of political theory as with feminism in other disciplines and feminist practice in the everyday world.

Feminist approaches to political theory can be loosely grouped into two general categories. The first involves examining the ways in which past political theorists have justified their (usually low) regard for women and their exclusion of women from political life.⁸ This approach tends to be somewhat limited since women *were* historically barred from the public realm, as were the concerns and activities relegated to women, namely, production and reproduction in the household. A study of this by itself shows how this exclusion was justified, or how misogyny and sexism manifest themselves in various thinkers and epochs. The result is often little more than a chronicle of "sexist attitudes." This approach is also beset by its dependence upon what past political theorists actually said about women, and since most theorists devoted their attention to a realm where women had no visible part, few of them said very much. Indeed, what they did say tends to be rather foolish, in the nature of unreflective afterthought or reiteration of the platitudes and attitudes of their epoch.

Most political theorists of the past simply did not bring the insight and creativity for which they are renowned to their reflections on the nature and proper place of women. Aristotle: a thinker esteemed by posterity for his perception of the human condition as one that moves subtly and complexly between nature and convention, left all this genius behind when he sought to fit women into his schema.⁹ Kant and Hegel: thinkers whose hallmark in the tradition of Western