

ARTICLES

Abolishing or regulating surrogacy. The meanings of freedom according to Italian feminism

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Surrogacy is a divisive emerging topic in Italian feminism: while some groups mobilize for a universal ban, other criticize the abolitionist request for neglecting women's freedom. This article identifies and discusses the principal themes of this debate. Abolitionists build their arguments on the theme of the commodification of woman and child on the theme of the unity of motherhood as a natural feminine trait; the other front argues that surrogacy can be an opportunity for empowerment and for liberating motherhood and parenthood from gender fixity. While the feminist discourse on surrogacy revolves around a woman-centric vision of freedom/agency, the authors believe that surrogacy, as a reproductive practice that might be normalized in future generations, should be discussed in light of the freedom of the "surrogate children". Inspired by J. Habermas' critique of liberal genetics and H. Arendt's notion of "new beginning", it is argued that surrogacy deprives the child of the awareness of being generated in a space free from any human intervention; this awareness is essential condition for enabling individuals to perceive themselves as the authentic authors of their social actions.

Keywords: assisted reproductive technology; Italian feminism; freedom; gestational surrogacy; Arendt; Habermas.

Introduction

The aim of the present article is to highlight and discuss the main positions adopted by Italian feminism towards the so-called "maternità surrogata" (surrogate motherhood), meaning, the practice of medically assisted procreation (MAP) which involves the gestation in the body of a woman of

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an embryo created in vitro and the transfer by agreement of the child to the intended parents. In this article we will use the term “gestational surrogacy” insofar as it unequivocally refers to those cases (representing the vast majority of the total cases of surrogacy practices in today’s global industry) in which the embryo is not genetically related to the surrogate. Conversely, “surrogate motherhood” might induce us to include the cases (more popular until the 1990s) in which the surrogate is also the biological mother of the child she carries.

This practice is not only a new front of conceptual elaboration, nor a mere political battle between those asking for its regulation and the faction instead invoking a blanket ban, but a theme whose outline leads back to the debate on “constructed” and “natural” sexual identity, and to the vision of a possible future scenario in which the female identity, and therefore the very *raison d’être* of the entire feminist movement, is dissolved. In summary, there are two main fronts: on the one hand, according gender-constructivist feminists, GS allows to free human beings from the biological destiny inherent in the characteristics of their sexual identity, as it enables motherhood without pregnancy, male and female biological parenthood without the sexual act and motherhood without female sexual identity; on the other hand, according to eco-feminists and those closer to the philosophy of difference, this freedom robs the woman of her specificity, that is, of the maternal potential inherent in pregnancy and childbirth, and reduces her to a mere means of reproduction in a market system governed by male logic. If for the former GS should be allowed and regulated so as to minimize abuse and guarantee greater rights to the various subjects participating in the practice, for the latter it should be abolished without exception.

In the first part of the article, we will outline the political and discursive context underpinning the feminist debate on GS in Italy; we will then present the main actions and themes with which the issue is addressed by the two fronts; finally, considering the very nature of the procreative action, we will argue the inadequacy of a debate on the freedom to dispose of one’s own body, drawing attention to the social effects of GS in terms of the freedom of future generations.

1. Methodology

We identified the relevant issues through the qualitative analysis of 8 in-depth and semi-structured telephone interviews with as many women, belonging to or associated with Italian feminist groups (such as *SNOQ-*

Libere, CIF, UDI, Leggendaria and *Arcilesbica*), in the summer of 2017, and by texts disseminated by feminist movements and opinion leaders on their websites, magazines and through the media. We also interviewed three men belonging to the pro-life movement, that is also fighting for worldwide abolition of the practice of GS. Both voices and texts were selected by snowball sampling: after observing for a year the public debate and feminist mobilization (reading the relevant press, attending two public conferences promoted by the feminist movements, networking on social networks and literature review) we contacted some of the most visible voices, who pointed us to texts to read and other people to contact. The interviews touched on the following points: reasons for opposition, genesis of the debate in the feminist movement, differences in positions on heterologous fertilization and GS, on homosexual and heterosexual clients, and on free and paid forms; possibility of empowerment for surrogates of poor countries; participation in transnational campaigns; alliances with other movements. The analysis is purely qualitative, and its sole purpose is to provide an overview of the crucial issues and conceptual frameworks behind the movements' reasoning and demands, to then try and read them critically according to social theory. The study neither represents nor exhausts all the thoughts animating the varied universe of feminist movements, women's movements and women's associations; more simply, it aims to develop an analysis of the main themes with which the most visible voices in this universe influence the public understanding of the social phenomenon called GS.

2. Results

2.1. *The feminist positions on medically assisted procreation – since Law No 40 to date*

For the feminist debate on GS to be placed correctly, it is necessary to at least mention what happened during the drafting of Law No 40 of 2004 on MAP and the following referendum, since it is precisely in that piece of legislation that GS finds its explicit prohibition, still in force in Italy¹. Law

¹ Art. 12 subsection 6: «Anyone who, in any form, realizes, organizes or advertises the marketing of gametes or embryos or gestational surrogacy is punished with imprisonment from three months to two years and with a fine from 600,000 to one million euros».

No 40 also bans heterologous fertilization, limits the use of these techniques to heterosexual couples of childbearing age and proven sterility or infertility, limits the maximum number of embryos that can be implanted to three, and forbids to freeze embryos and carry out scientific research on them. The law, requested and pursued since the second half of the 1990s to regulate a field in which biomedical progresses could result in normative uncertainty, ended up being the subject of a long battle between political parties and civil society, culminating in 2005 with the call for a referendum promoted by the secular segment of society (defending science as a means of affirming the right to be parents), defeated by the Catholic front (which encouraged abstention in defence of the human rights of the embryo (De Marco, 2011)). However, some of the prohibitions imposed by law, such as cryopreservation and heterologous insemination, have been circumvented by jurisprudence over the years. Although Italy seems to comply with the ban on GS, some judgments and verdicts that recognize to couples, including same-sex ones, the parental status on children born to surrogate mothers abroad (one hundred per year according to unofficial estimates) on the principle of the best interest of the child, could signal a growing acceptance of the practice.

Let us now return to the referendum on the Law No 40 of 2004. It should be pointed out that GS was then only a marginal issue in a debate focused instead on «the criteria for eligibility to MAP techniques, the protection of the subjective rights of the persons involved, the risks related to invasive medical practices, and the meaning of human life in the embryonic phase» (De Marco, 2011, p. 111). Feminism was divided: while some, in the name of women's freedom to have children through new technologies and heterologous fertilization, including outside of an heterosexual relationship, supported the abolition of a law considered too restrictive; others opposed the revocatory referendum, aiming at defending the naturalness of procreation from the domination of biomedical technology that, under more liberal laws, would eventually reduce women to reproductive machines by controlling their production capacity and denying their dignity. The women who choose the latter side of the debate – oversimplified into a sexual dichotomy between men-defenders-of-the-law and women who “hate embryos and foetuses” – found themselves labelled by their very “comrades-in-arms” as obscurantists and priests-lovers, due to the widespread fear that defending the statutory restrictions laid down by Law No 40 of 2004 could provide the discursive basis for further political initiatives aimed at chipping away at the legal achievements in the field of abortion (Tavella, Di Pietro, 2006).

The new focus of the debate on GS is today causing some of the feminists opposed to this practice to rethink their positions, previously in favour of the technicalization of conception and in particular to heterologous fertilization; others, instead, are opposed to surrogacy but continue to accept heterologous fertilization as it does not question the unity and coherence of the figure of the mother – coinciding with the woman who physically gives birth.

2.2. *The feminist mobilisation against GS*

GS came to the forefront of public discourse in 2016, during a fiery political clash over the approval of the law on civil unions, finally passed on May 20 of the same year. Although it is mainly heterosexual couples who resort to this practice, its opponents portray it to public opinion as a mode of procreation potentially endorsed by the new law on civil unions, particularly with the institution (absent in the final draft of the law) of the step-child adoption, *i.e.* the adoption of the biological child of the partner, which would ensure the recognition of *ex-post* rights stemming from an unlawful practice. This temporal and discursive positioning of the debate is confirmed by a brief research we carried out at the end of March 2017 on the online archives of the Italian newspaper *Corriere della Sera*, which we chose among the mainstream press as the leading daily newspaper for circulation, according to data from the *Accertamento Diffusione Stampa* (Press Diffusion Assessment). The number of articles with the keyword “maternità surrogata” went from 13 in 2014 to 8 in 2015, and in 2016 it increased tenfold, reaching 90 articles.

If we want to point to a key date for Italian feminism to publicly take a stand against GS, this can be 5 December 2015, when the group *Se non ora quando-Libere* (*SNOQ-Libere*) called for Europe to ban the practice. As can be seen from the following sentences, the supporting thematic framework of the problem has since then been that of freedom: «GS is not an act of freedom; we cannot allow women to be again objects at other people’s disposal: no longer at the patriarch’s but at the market’s». With this appeal, *SNOQ-Libere* substantiates its alliance with the French feminists led by Sylviane Agacinski and the *Collectif pour le Respect de la Personne* (*CORP*), who on 2 February 2016 organized an assembly in the French Parliament to request an international convention for the abolition of the practice in the Charter of Paris. In Italy, the feminist mobilisation against GS culminated in the international meeting in Rome of 23 March

2017: «Motherhood at the crossroads: from free choice to surrogacy. A global challenge», again promoted by *SNOQ-Libere* as part of the project «Let's take motherhood back». The meeting yielded a recommendation to CEDAW in which the signatories call for banning GS as a violation of women's dignity and human rights. These actions, by both Italian and French feminists, also come together in the international campaign *Stop Surrogacy Now*, born in the United States in 2015 under inspiration from bioethicist Jennifer Lahl, witnessing the participation of organizations and individual intellectuals and activists from 18 countries inspired by both feminism and pro-life positions.

Another section of Italian feminism has distanced itself from abolitionist appeals by calling for further reflection before invoking prohibition. We here adopt the terminology proposed by Maniere (2017) to name these fronts as abolitionist and reformist. In order to identify families of concepts for each of the two fronts, we can advance the hypothesis that a large part of the abolitionist side can be traced back to difference feminism (stream of feminism inspired by the philosophy of difference), whose souls are in part close to ecofeminism and in part to Catholic sensibility, while the reformers are closer to gender feminism, inspired by social constructivism and Rosi Braidotti's post-human feminism. The themes described in the next section will further clarify this statement. However, it must also be acknowledged that each label represents a limited outlook on the various complex stances of Italian feminism. The purpose of this article is not to find the most relevant categories to represent this multiform universe, but to identify and delimit the families of concepts to which the interviewees refer in support of their position, and to propose a critical reading of some of them. We would also like to point out that among those who did not sign the *SNOQ-Libere* appeal for the universal abolition of all forms of GS, either altruistic or commercial, there are those whose thoughts can be traced back to that group because they admit the very remote possibility that GS can also be practiced outside the market, without any money transactions, between women of the same family or friendship network. This possibility would be very different from the one commonly defined as altruistic and provided for in some legal systems (such as the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, Netherlands, and others) without any compensation to the surrogate mother, who receives only a reimbursement for expenses. On the other hand, in the reformists' side, besides those who openly accept the practice in all its forms, there are also those who say they are against exploitation and commercialisation but admit that the practice can be regulated in such a way as

to provide only reimbursement for expenses and greater protection for the subjects involved.

Finally, we would like to point out that this division between those against and those in favour of GS affects not only Italian feminism, but also that of other countries (this division exists, *e.g.*, in France, Romania, Sweden, the United States, India, Canada, Australia) as well as the movement in its transnational dimension (Davies, 2017; Markens, 2007). It is not even an unprecedented fracture; on the contrary, it recalls the well-documented battles in favour of or against prostitution and pornography (Ferguson, 1984), where the literature attributes the labels of liberal and radical to the two fronts, which we take up in an attempt to describe the positions on the variegated panorama of reproductive technologies (Farquhar, 1996; Thomsson, 2002).

2.3. Analysis of the themes in the abolitionist and reformist discourses

In this section we will present the main themes used by the two sides to argue, the one, the request for abolition and, the other, the objection to such a request.

The expression “womb for rent” used by those asking for abolition highlights the main theme of this group’s discourse, *i.e.*, the opposition to GS as a form of commodification and exploitation of the body, primarily of the women, but also of the children thus born, considered a violation of human dignity. In this discourse GS is described as a practice in which women’s productive capacity is sold on the market, where they do not enjoy full freedom: neither freedom from need (since it is assumed that having real job opportunities and earnings women would not participate in this market); nor freedom to choose consciously based on risk assessment and ethical implications; not even freedom to decide what will happen to their body while providing the service (*e.g.* having the final say if the clients want an abortion).

Think of the illiterate women forced by their husbands or mothers-in-law who do not understand what surrogacy involves, who try to escape and go mad when they understand that they have to part with the newborn. Very few of them have the awareness required to see it as a form of emancipation. And is this worth the pain of a whole host of them? (...) How I wish there were other ways of emancipation, I think it is terrible that there are no other ways for some women than to become prostitutes or sell their children (Interview No 11).

In this group, the practice is also defined as an enslavement, especially considering the condition of many surrogates in Asian markets who are hospitalized in dorm clinics, subjected to repeated hormonal treatments and invasive screening, asked to follow special diets required by the clients, who can also ask them to refrain from sexual intercourse, sports and other activities, or are filmed during childbirth and subjected to routine caesareans scheduled to coincide the birth with the couple's willingness to "collect the goods" (Pande, 2014). This discourse also criticizes the conception of the child as a commodity as an individual born to be sold and to generate profit in a market flourishing on poverty, on the need and lack of opportunities for women, on economic and social inequalities between poor women and rich clients, both in a global North/South dimension, and on the social stratification within the same society (Dasgupta, Das Dasgupta, 2014).

The second major theme in the abolitionist front is the need to reaffirm the uniqueness of the mother figure. GS is accused of contravening the legal principle of *mater certa*, which establishes unity and sameness between the mother and the woman physically giving birth. As an interviewee points out, this principle reflects the child's behaviour at birth: she instinctively turns to the body where she lived her uterine life, recognizing it as a *mother* regardless of other possible biological bonds and of the social function of another mother who can come on stage at a later time. GS is considered as a form of expropriation of the woman of her maternal function, which, following the advantage point of difference feminism, is considered a paramount figure in the mother-father parental couple (Muraro, 2016). GS is also seen by the feminists supporting this discourse as a tool of patriarchy and the market to expropriate the woman of her maternal function reducing her to a mere container and ultimately transform the human being into goods.

Constructivism has made us think of motherhood as a construct, and female emancipation as freedom from a natural destiny. In Italy there has been more resistance to this type of feminism. I think that motherhood is not a destiny, but a freedom. However, to confuse it with commodification is subjugation (Interview No 8).

A third theme, which nevertheless remains in the background, is linked to these two: the reflection that GS imposes on the meaning of human life and the concept of person. Conversely, this is precisely the main theme on which the pro-life groups within the abolitionist faction build their opposition to surrogacy. It is an unstable meeting point, which could reveal the

differences between the two movements regarding the beginning of life of the embryo and the foetus, and consequently their different views on abortion. On this issue, which will not be further developed in this article, it should be pointed out that the presence of feminists and pro-lifers in the same abolitionist front cannot be interpreted as an alliance, since no common actions are carried out and the interviewees reaffirm the distance between the two groups.

Finally, another theme mentioned by the abolitionists are the risks to psychic and physical health that GS implies not only for surrogates but also for egg donors and children (for a detailed list: Corradi., 2017; Tavella, Di Pietro, 2006).

Let us now consider the themes characterizing the reformist front, where the privileged term is neither “surrogate motherhood”, nor “womb for rent”, but “gestation for others” (third-party gestation), a term that recalls precisely the field of services in a liberal perspective.

According to the voices on this front, women must be allowed full self-determination: to autonomously manage their bodies, including their reproductive capacities, including participating actively and consciously in the market that offers them an opportunity for emancipation and gain. It is therefore a question of empowerment, of increasing one’s economic and social power, of negotiating within the family, and so on, through any type of economic activity, including the use of one’s own organs, biological functions or care functions (Cooper, Waldby, 2014; Rudrappa, 2015). Reformists accuse abolitionists of considering the surrogate as an *a priori* passive victim, a container, unable to independently decide the best method to emancipate herself by taking risks and responsibilities, especially if the surrogate is a poor woman of the South of the world, where the civilizing discourse of Western feminists tends to deny their emancipation.

The second major theme with which reformers defend the practice or counter the request for abolition could be termed “resignification of motherhood and opposition to biologism”. According to this perspective, GS allows to break down motherhood into several moments attributable to a plurality of subjects (donors of genetic material, pregnant woman, clients) and also to break down the parental dichotomy mother-father at both the biological and the educational/social level.

One can speak of “female fatherhood” for the egg donor. It is a “female father”, by analogy with the male experience, because of the “offering” of the genetic heritage. On the one hand, the father is reduced from a symbolic figure to gametes and the paternal-patriarchal order of filiation to biological

procreation. On the other hand, the difference between sexed bodies is once again reduced. In fact, providing eggs cannot be compared to providing sperm, given the highly invasive medical path, with very high physical and psychological costs. The “similarity” with men can appear just as strong for the woman who resorts to gestation for others. Especially if she does not offer the egg, as it often happens, the break with genetic and bodily motherhood makes her a pretended mother – a mother who usurps that name. On the scene of gestational surrogacy, we are thus persuaded to see many children “without a mother”, but with two “fathers”. Even when it is used by a heterosexual couple (Text extrapolated from the magazine *Leggendaria*, No 123).

This decomposition would make it possible to overcome what is seen as a limitation intrinsic to a motherhood coinciding with childbirth, where motherhood is reduced to a mere reproductive process in which, according to some, there is no choice and no responsibility. This group sees the request for blanket ban as a denial of the freedom to “re-signify” and accuses abolitionists of basing their arguments on the biologist paradigm, the same one that governs the normative heterosexual patriarchy and fuels the scare of motherhood stolen by homosexual men. According to this perspective, womanhood and motherhood should not be defined through biology, female identity should not be defined through the exaltation of motherhood, which instead should be seen as equal to other biological functions, to be used economically, and, finally, motherhood may not coincide with childbirth.

It is therefore not tolerable today to seriously hear the physical process of pregnancy defined as “motherhood”, since in itself – as we all know – it can exclude both the procreative desire and the willingness to take responsibility and care for the unborn child. Consequently, it is improper to discuss of surrogate mothers as well. We can instead discuss gestational surrogacy; the Italian law – within the limits we know – already allows a woman who gets pregnant to split the two processes and reject the unwanted role of mother, through either the interruption of pregnancy or the permanent renunciation to care for the newborn (text extrapolated from *L'Espresso*).

Furthermore, the reformist front does not consider unnatural the separation of mother and child, since it was already frequent in the past in other forms of transfer of children (for example, in situations of poverty or children born as servants and raised by masters), as well as in adoption.

3. Discussion. Freedom as power: a critical reading

What said so far could prompt many reflections on motherhood and fatherhood, on the idea of “dignity” (which often occurs in the abolitionist front and which deserves to be further investigated and clarified), on the surrogacy market and on other basic issues emphatically highlighted in the interviews. We choose to dwell on the central issue of freedom, because it has characterized feminism throughout its history. In the feminist debate on GS, freedom is understood as the ability for self-determination. The reformist front maintains people’s freedom to dispose of themselves, of their reproductive capacity and sexual identity, using their own body and that of other people to achieve forms of parenting assisted by technology and not limited by traditional biology-based conceptions. In the abolitionist front, freedom is “matricentric” and individualistic; its boundaries are marked by the female sexual identity, the only one to hold maternal potential – understood as a “naturally” indivisible function – that women today can decide whether to actualize or not with greater freedom than in the past (Izzo, 2017).

In these discourses, freedom is understood as the ability to dispose of one’s own body as a woman, which belongs to us as property, an object, something we can buy or sell (a gamete, an embryo or the service provided by the uterus of a pregnant woman). This understanding of freedom as power is consistent with the core of feminist theory, which reads various aspects of women’s lives, including procreation, in terms of the exercise or inequality of the power between the sexes (Jackson, Jones, 1998). It is a notion of power as conflict, since it is understood as the property of an individual and as a zero-sum game (the greater the power of the man, the less the power of the woman). Feminism applies this notion to interpersonal relations between the sexes, apparently overlooking the fact that, outside of this sphere and within a political one, this same conflicting notion of power leads, through a rather short inclined plane, to generic concept of power *tout court*, or force, and therefore to the idea that it constitutes the foundation of the patriarchy from which feminism distances itself: male *power* is the *rule* of someone over someone else. In classical political theory, the notions of power, force and domination belong to a single conceptual family, within which we find also physical force or violence; an exponent of such theory, Max Weber, defines the power of the state on the basis of the monopoly of physical force. When feminism (for example, in its extensive literature on violence against women) establishes the equivalence between male power and violence, it should remember the influential Weberian con-

ceptual system (Bobbio, 1981), but it should also propose its own original concept of power, appropriate to its objectives of emancipation and empowerment.

In the feminist thought, the female body and the woman as a whole are either protagonists or prisoners of power as domination; in this theoretical key, the woman can only be either *dominated*, exploited, commodified, or be so *powerful* as to dispose of herself and everything that, in her being a woman, can be bought and sold. Women's freedom as power (self-determination or matricentrism) sidesteps the freedom of those who are born. Consistent with this conceptual sequence of freedom-power, the woman's body is theorized as a site where the relations of power and dominion of society are reproduced at the micro level; a seamless private-political place on the theoretical level. The body is invaded, used, exploited to obtain pleasure, power or profit, and the reproductive functions are regulated by a social organization that privileges the male interest and by the technique dominated by men (Dworkin, 1987). With these premises, the body thus becomes both ground and weapon in the battle for emancipation and freedom from male power: feminists have claimed the self-management of *their* body, its availability, complete or partial depending on the theoretical strands of reference, or at least a greater control on it than that exercised by a man. For some, technology represents a male product that threatens the autonomy of women in the reproductive field; a field where, according to difference feminism, the female body becomes a site on which to build a symbolic order related to motherhood and alternative to the male-dominated one. For others, technology is seen as a possible ally for modifying, strengthening and exploiting one's own body and for freeing it from the obligation of motherhood (Farquhar, 1996).

Jurgen Habermas (2001, English translation 2003) reminds us that the process of individualization through which the human person is developed results by the coexistence of the cultural and natural sphere: socialization with the other (cultural sphere) is grafted onto the individual awareness of being coincident with our organic body (natural sphere); we know that it is created in a space of nature closed to human action, that is, through self-regulatory processes not modified by the human will. Habermas believes that, by applying genetic engineering to procreation, the body-organism is relocated to the cultural space, that is, a space in which the object can be shaped by the will of other human beings, and thus acquires the identity of a body-commodity produced by the decisions of others. In this process, the conception of oneself as the owner of oneself, the authors of one's own actions, is compromised.

We can achieve continuity in the vicissitudes of a life history only because we may refer, for establishing the difference between what *we* are and what happens *to us*, to a bodily existence which is itself the continuation of a natural fate going back beyond the socialization process (Habermas, 2001, English translation 2003, p. 60).

Habermas argues that the unavailability of the being-organism and the recognition of the coexistence of nature and culture in the human being keep the relationship between children and parents in a certain symmetrical way, in the sense that both are free to be. This freedom is instead lacking in the relationship between the programmed and the programmers, which entails an irreversible asymmetry. Habermas formulates this thought based on Arendt's theory of action, for which birth is a "beginning", in the sense that with birth is generated a life that will have the power to act, where action is a relational component of human life that puts human beings in direct contact with each other without the mediation of objects: «The new beginning inherent in birth can make itself felt in the world only because the newcomer possesses the capacity of beginning something anew, that is, of acting» (Arendt, 1958, p. 9). With this in mind, the freedom to use female bodies to produce children through surrogacy and other MAPs is equivalent to "manufacturing". Just as *homo faber* extracts a block of marble from the quarry and then sculpts it into a statue, so, in a theoretically equivalent way, in GS the process of manufacturing is applied to procreation. Manufacturing already has a model or a mental image of the object; it is entirely determined by the categories of means and end, which are confused to the point that the end is indistinguishable from the means; and, over time, it has a definite beginning and a predictable end. *Homo faber*, as Arendt reminds us, is «indeed a lord and master, not only because he is the master or has set himself up as the master of all nature but because he is master of himself and his doings» (1958, p. 144). *Homo faber* is the lord of nature; it is him who, according to feminist thought, invents and violently administers the system of patriarchy, transforming a symbolic organization based on sex into a system of social domination. In these notes on manufacturing, we find again the conception of power as domination critically discussed above. It is no coincidence that Arendt cultivates in all her works a conception of power explicitly different from Weber's; power is a potential, never the attribute of an individual, and emerges when people gather together forming communities (Arendt, 1958). Feminism would derive great explanatory benefit from adopting this conception, avoiding the creation of a new form of con-

flict between dominated and dominant, a new form of dictatorship of the proletariat that envisages the triumph of the subject-woman in history.

Our interviewees invoke the freedom of the woman within the man-woman conflict, as the latter is always seen as a subjugated subject that must be empowered. However, in MAP, there is another dimension of freedom at stake that in this way is obliterated. It is the freedom of the children who come into the world by the unshakable will of their intended parents, who accept every economic sacrifice, every legitimate or illegitimate practice and every available medical intervention in order to bring these lives into the world. The parents' will of power in bringing the child into the world contributes in weakening the ethical basis of the future freedom of the child herself.

On the reformist front, the freedom to plan and manufacture the genetic endowment of future individuals conflicts with their very freedom, the freedom of those who are born, born or bought. As Habermas reminds us «even the most prudent, liberal, and empathetic parents cannot preclude that their child may one day [...] reproach their parents for failing to choose a different design that would have provided better initial conditions» (2005, English translation 2008, p. 202). For example, because they did not choose different gametes, different eggs and a different surrogate mother, which would have guaranteed greater intelligence, beauty, physical performance and health. Parents decide according to their preferences and their choice is thus potentially restrictive on the freedom of others to take possession of themselves and their history and lay deep foundations for the difference between becoming and being made. In MAPs, the unshakable will to bring a baby into the world is anything but casual and unavailable; it is the original will that will become normative in the child's eyes.

The abolitionist front also centres freedom on women. It asks to limit this freedom in the name of the feminine character of motherhood, as the latter also coincides with pregnancy, and therefore in the name of the relationship between the woman's body and the surrogate child. This polarization neglects the relational character of procreation, i.e. between male/father and female/mother and between the two and the child, a triad which procreation cannot ignore, even in a space objectified by the intervention of technology (Donati, 1999).

Faced with a same-sex couple affirming their right to fatherhood, a problem emerges for the feminist thought in terms of expropriation of the mother figure. Can we think that one can do without the mother?» Interviewer: «While one can do without the father?» Interviewee: «In my opinion, he is a

the mother, the opposite of what the patriarchal order has claimed for centuries (Interview No 2).

Moreover, this polarization allows for no space for the recognition of the intrinsic freedom of the future human being, which is a prerequisite for an inter-generational relationship between equals. For the children, life must be earned from the beginning, it is something unique, new, that must break through. «Having a sense of oneself as free means, in the first place, being able to initiate something new» (Habermas, 2005, English translation 2008, p. 186).

Conclusion

With this article the authors wanted to contribute to the sociological understanding of the discourses and underlying theories of a field of reflection, mobilization, and policy-making, which as of now is almost half-hearted compared to more established issues such as prostitution and trafficking, violence against women, and abortion – and this not only in Italian feminism but more generally in the international movement. We documented that the issue of GS is dividing feminism into two main fronts: those who call for the total abolition of the practice as commodifying and damaging to the dignity of women and children, and those who admit the provision of procreative skills “for others”. We saw that the abolitionist front affirms the unity of the mother figure and defends not only the genetic link, but also the bodily one between the woman physically giving birth and the child; on the other hand, the reformist camp admits the decomposition of motherhood into stages and processes, and its dissociation from the female identity. We also saw that the arguments of the two fronts revolve around the freedom of the woman and the adult individual, freedom understood as Weberian power, as something that individuals possess for themselves and compete for. The authors propose instead to think of the continuum between freedom and power as Arendt conceived it: freedom, intrinsic to birth, of human beings, that is to say, of being agents of unprecedented social actions, which therefore takes place in community action. With this assumption, the authors, following Habermas, question whether birth from GS maintains the prerogatives of Arendt’s beginning and propose to shift the focus of public discourse on this emerging procreative practice (whether for or against) from the identity and freedom of women today to the

freedom of children, and therefore of the generation and society of tomorrow.

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