The most valuable of all Capitall; a gender reading of economics texts
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Chapter 1

Central questions and main concepts

1.1 Introduction

'What do you mean when you say that economic reasoning is gendered? What does productivity, income and capital have to do with women and men? I just don't see it, show me!' In the years that I have been working on this thesis, this has been a common response when I explain the topic of my research to economists. Especially at the beginning of this project, the question was difficult to answer: where does one start?

Standard economic concepts and theories are generally seen as gender neutral. Most economists implicitly or explicitly consider models and concepts in macro and microeconomics that do not deal specifically with 'women's issues' as free from any specific perception of gender or male bias. A lot of neoclassical research on the economic position of women regards the concepts and theories used as value-free in the sense of not being linked to a specific perception of gender or masculine perspective. There are many indications, however, that this view of economic concepts and theories needs serious reconsideration.

Traditionally, economic science was (and to large extent still is) dominated by men, who took a specific position in society vis-à-vis women. For that reason, it is only logical for economic thought to be, at least to some extent, founded on men's experiences of and perspectives on economic reality. How and to what extent did the fact that men developed economic science rather than women, have an impact on the economic texts and theories produced?

During most of the history of economic science, the characteristics of women and men were predominantly perceived as given by nature. Recently however, feminists, anthropologists and other social scientists have shown that the definition of femininity and masculinity - the way these are given meaning and importance - changes and differs from situation to situation, from society to society, and from period to period. These insights make it possible to question biological concepts of gender differences and the traditional masculine perspective on economics, and indeed demand that we do so. But how do we conceptualize and investigate the relationship between gender and economic science?

Perceptions of masculinity and femininity and the way these are linked to women and men, have considerable impact on the social organization of a society, on the use of space, on regulations, institutions and, for instance, on the structure of the job market. Scientists, being
part of society as well as of a specific community of their own, also attribute meaning to the
differences between women and men. These perceptions, which mostly remain implicit,
influence the metaphors scientists use (e.g. Keller 1985, Wertheim 1995), the images and
models they construct (e.g. Schiebinger 1989), the topics they study and the answers they
accept as 'good research' (e.g. Nelson 1995b, Longino 1998). The feminist economic literature
that emerged in the late 1980s and early 1990s shows that economic concepts and theories too
are in various ways subject to gender influences (e.g. Elson (ed.) 1991, Humphries (ed.) 1995,
Ferber & Nelson (eds) 1993, Kuiper & Sap et al. (eds) 1995).¹

The investigation of the relationship between gender and economic science requires
not only the acknowledgement of the social character of economic science but also its
historical character and the use made by economists of established concepts and theories that
may contain specific perceptions of gender. This implies that research on the gendered
caracter of economic concepts and theories deals with aspects and insights deriving from
various fields of study. This includes not only feminist economics but also the history of
economics, women's studies and the philosophy of economics.

References to specific definitions of gender are often used to provide a basis for or to
support specific value patterns that have considerable power effects. To indicate that
something is 'good' and 'important' or 'bad' and 'irrelevant' - and thus who is 'in' and who is
'out' - can effectively be done by characterizing it as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. In Western
Europe - though in some countries and subcultures more than in others - a hierarchical and
asymmetrical perception of gender dominated: 'the masculine' was regarded as positive and as
the norm, and 'the feminine' as negative. To obtain an insight into what perceptions of gender
have been used in economic science and how, it is important to disentangle and make explicit
the various levels at which gender works, how femininity and masculinity are (re)defined, and
by whom. Acknowledging the power aspect of gender thus requires an assessment of both the
positions of the economists under scrutiny and of the researcher herself, in historical and other
terms.

In recent decades, the economic and social position of North American and European
women has changed substantially and has come closer to being equal to that of men.
Notwithstanding these developments, most economists continue to use concepts and theories
that were developed in a context of traditional perceptions of gender relations in which the
sexual division of household and market labor was seen as self-evident. The family model that
ascribes the authority and the financial responsibilities for the family to the husband, and the
care responsibilities to the wife, who is financially dependent on her husband, thus comes to
be seen as natural. When the empirical validity of this model is assumed rather than assessed,
current economic research runs the risk of producing a one-sided and ideological approach to
economic inquiry. Moreover, it may also hamper the study of the economic effects of the
current changes in gender relations and the ability to devise the conceptual innovations
necessary to address them. To counter this as far as possible in the context of this thesis, I end
this book with a discussion on the insights produced by applying an explicit feminist
perspective and on the scope for integrating gender awareness in economic science.

¹ According to Elson, the supposed gender neutrality of economics 'masks a deeper gender bias'; 'a
hidden set of assumptions underlying macro-economic thinking which is deeply imbued with male
bias'. (Elson (ed.) 1991, 166)
To investigate the gendered character of economics, I decided to examine pivotal texts that are still used and/or referred to by economists. This thesis analyzes the use of gender notions and the changing perceptions of gender in these texts by various economists throughout the history of economic thought. Let me stress here that the focus is not on how economists think about women. Instead, this thesis aims to develop a way of reading that can be applied to any economic text and that supplies a broader perspective on the relationship between gender and economic science.

The second section of this introductory chapter formulates the central research questions. The third section positions this thesis in relation to recent work in women's studies, feminist economics and the philosophy and history of economic science. Section 1.4 contains a discussion of the main concepts used in this thesis, and in the fifth section the preliminary method of analysis applied in Part II is outlined. The last section addresses the structure of this thesis as a whole.

1.2 Central research questions

Instead of limiting the focus to the importance and structuring influence of the hierarchical and asymmetrical perceptions of gender on economic thought, I would formulate the central research question of this thesis in a broader, more open manner, as follows:

Are economic texts gendered? If so, how and so what?

I shall examine this general question by addressing five sub-questions. Although reading economic texts - older and more recent ones - and identifying the use of conceptualizations of gender may be part of the student's education in literature and philosophy, it is new to most economists. It is therefore important to start by identifying the use of sex/gender distinctions in a text and the masculine or feminist perspective applied. Thus the first sub-question is: Are economic texts linked to biological or cultural concepts of gender differences and if so, how?

Perceptions of 'femininity' and 'masculinity' change over time. They may even change in the course of one text. Attention will therefore be paid to the second question: How are 'femininity' and 'masculinity' given content in economic texts?

Answers to this question can only to a limited extent be found in the text under scrutiny. Therefore these texts also require to be addressed within the context of the academic debate they were part of, and within the broader social and historical context of their time. The issue of how a text is gendered in relation to its historical, social and academic context and how to analyze this, thus requires an answer to the third sub-question: How can we conceptualize the changing relationship between gender and economics, more specifically economic texts?

The relevance of the gendered character of economic texts - the 'so what' issue - is addressed in terms of its impact on the content of economic reasoning. I will refrain here from addressing the impact of the gendered character of economic texts on the social and economic position of women and men or on the economy in general, as this requires a different kind of research. Instead I shall focus on a fourth sub-question: What is the impact of the applied
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conceptualization of gender on the economic content of the text?

The last question I address is: How can a feminist perspective and/or a gender-aware approach contribute to the reading of economic texts?

1.3 Positioning of the research

The issue of the gendered character of economic texts is related to various research areas, specifically to women’s studies, feminist economics and the philosophy and history of economics.

Women's studies

Women's studies started in the late 1960s in the fields of anthropology, sociology, and political science, and spread to other disciplines, such as history and literary theory, and eventually to biology, physics and economics. Feminist scholars first concentrated on questions and problems especially concerning women. Besides empirical research, one of the things they did was to criticize the belief that traits shared by women or by men are biological in nature and can be considered as ‘of essence’ to a man or to a woman. In opposition to this 'essentialism', these scholars saw the differences between women and men as socially and culturally based and constructed. This innovative shift in the conceptualization of differences between women and men - from the biological concept of 'sex' to 'gender' as a social and cultural construct - freed theoretical discussions in women's studies from their biological underpinnings. It also enabled feminist theorists to focus on the processes through which gender was constructed (Outshoorn 1989). Feminist research analyzed the construction and workings of gender, for instance, as social roles, as effects of early childhood relations, as metaphors in language, as a structuring principle in social organization, as effects of power relations, and as a fundamental category of scientific thought.

In line with this, an interest in the gendered character of scientific concepts and theories developed. Instead of just indicating the perceptions of masculinity and femininity used and constructed in various contexts, the use of gender was also analyzed as an important means of producing power inequality between women and men. It was considered as a way of producing meaning and specific value patterns that defined masculinity as superior to femininity (e.g. Van Drenth 1988, Outshoorn 1989, Van den Bogaard et al. 1996).

While the gender concept gained ground very quickly in women's studies, economic science was relatively late in joining these discussions (Brouns 1988, Kuiper & Sap et al. (eds) 1995). This thesis makes use of concepts of gender developed in women's studies to analyze the use of gender in economic science, more specifically economic texts. This enables me to address the way the conceptualization of gender differences has impacted on economic theorizing and vice versa.

Use is made here of feminist theory and research conducted on gendered texts,

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3 See also Fausto-Sterling 1986, Kimball 1981.
4 Even the dichotomy between 'Nature' and 'Culture' that lies at the basis of the sex/gender distinction itself, was analyzed as such (Butler 1993).
concepts and dichotomies in various disciplines (e.g. sociology, political science and physics). The overviews of women's studies research from the range of disciplines indicate various levels at which feminist analysis of academic research has been conducted (see e.g. Fonow & Cook (eds) 1991). After defining research questions concerning women and gathering data on these topics, feminist scholars formulated a critique of the content of theories and methods and constructed new theories and explored and applied non-standard, generally more qualitative, methods of research. The question arose of whether it was possible to remove the male bias in scientific research and whether the use of a wider range of methods was at all attainable. Perhaps masculine perspectives were inherent to theories and concepts of scientific knowledge. Attention was paid to the formulation of epistemological and ontological critiques of standard perceptions of knowledge and discussions on feminist methodologies. These levels of feminist research developed more or less successively, albeit without replacing one another. This thesis is of the latter kind in the sense that it addresses issues of an epistemological and ontological character.

Sandra Harding (1987) distinguishes three methodologies in emerging feminist research. The first is 'feminist empiricism', which accepts the positivist and objectivist perceptions of knowledge but merely adds women and women's issues to their analysis. The second is the 'feminist standpoint', which conceives of women's experience - their social, cultural and biological experience - as fundamentally different from that of men. This implies not only that orthodox learning is based on men's - partial - experience but that feminists can also make a contribution that is based in their experience 'as women'. The third feminist approach as distinguished by Harding is 'feminist postmodernism' that challenges the assumptions the epistemological project upon which feminist empiricism and the feminist standpoint are based. It is skeptical towards universalizing claims for reason, science, language, progress and the subject/self (Harding 1987, 188). Whereas Harding herself tends toward the feminist standpoint approach to science, she later stresses the importance of striving for strict objectivity (Harding 1995).

Like Harding, I consider a feminist critique of scientific values to be of great importance. Such a critique has at least partly to be based on a feminist awareness and experience. Rather than being determined by sex, however, these experiences 'as women' are time and context dependent. During this research my own view on sex/gender distinction has been changed, as the awareness of the importance of being a woman has increased, mostly in the positive sense. The acknowledgement of the sex and gender distinction and the way that it is dealt therewith only increased.

Philosophy of economic science

Mainstream economic philosophy, adopting a Popperian/Lakatosian slant on economic science, contains a predominantly rationalist and internalist approach to the development of economic concepts and research programs (e.g. Latsis 1976, Blaug 1980, De Marchi 1988, De Marchi & Blaug (eds) 1991). The critical discussion in the field ranges from sociological and economic approaches to economic science (e.g. Hands 1994), to indicating the influence of political relations and the development of capitalist society (e.g. Katouzian 1980, Fine 1982, Resnick & Wolff 1987), to applying more philosophical and analytical approaches (e.g. Hausman 1992, Rosenberg 1992, Mäki 1992) and rhetoric and discourse analysis (e.g. Henderson, Dudley-Evans & Backhouse (eds) 1993 (see also Backhouse 1994)). The critical
debate on the methodological and philosophical underpinnings of neoclassical economics, however, remains predominantly analytical and internal in character in the sense that the logical foundations of neoclassical economic science are severely criticized without a position outside the neoclassical economic program being developed. Moreover, recently there has been a tendency to direct attention to the metaphors, concepts and practices applied in physics and other 'hard' sciences, and thus to establish the scientific status and value-free and non-political character of economic philosophy.

In this thesis, I take another direction in addressing the gendered character of economic texts - a topic containing social, political and textual aspects. An explicit attempt is made to deal with the historical and contextual character of economic science, and economic texts are conceived of as both a result and a condition of the work of great economists.

Having introduced rhetoric as a means to appraise economists' techniques of speaking and writing McCloskey assesses neoclassical economics from a rhetorical approach. She concludes that its predominance proves its rhetoric superiority over other economic approaches (McCloskey 1983, 1986). I intend to follow McCloskey as far as her approach to economic discourse is concerned: I shall deal with economic arguments and theories in their textual form, as specific publications such as books and articles. I shall examine texts, which can be stated as well accepted by the discipline. Where McCloskey requests that successful rhetoric should be further developed, I take a more critical position and investigate how the impact of implicit and explicit views on gender relations can be indicated in successful economic texts. To what extent the use of specific concepts of gender is of influence on the acceptance of a text is not addressed here.

As Backhouse, Dudley-Evans & Henderson (1993) indicate more techniques of textual analysis and literary critiques are available than are applied and suggested by McCloskey. In the analysis of historical economic texts I use methods of textual analysis developed in women studies in literary theory and analytical instruments applied in the history of economic thought. I shall discuss these at greater length in section 1.4, entitled 'Preliminary method of analysis' and in Chapter 4.

History of economic science
To address the gendered character of established and standardized theoretical concepts I make use of the work done in the context of the history of economic science. Since the publication in 1992 of one of the first books on women's issues in the history of economics, Pujol's *Feminism and anti-feminism in early economic thought* (1992), the work of women economists in the history of economic thought has gained increasing attention (e.g. Cooper 1993, Dimand, Dimand & Forget 1995, Groenewegen (ed.) 1994).

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5 This is mainly the result of the way these authors tend to define economics as neoclassical economics and the way they justify this by reasons of authority (Hausman 1992). Thus they tend to reproduce the dominance of this research program (Mäki 1996; for a similar critique on Hausman, see also Reuten 1996).

6 Awareness and knowledge of the way economics applies rhetorics, the way rhetorics works, and what is successful in the exchange market of ideas in economics, will, according to McCloskey, make economics a better science (McCloskey 1986).

7 Interest in the work of women economists and in discussions on 'women's issues' has long been limited. For example, of the 200 economists Mark Blaug discusses in his *Great economists before...*
the history of economics focuses on economists' views on issues such as marriage, wage differences between women and men, and women's labor participation, and on the work of feminists and/or women economists in the history of economic science. Scholars like Folbre (1991) discuss the emergence of economic theories and concepts in relation to gender and address the gendered character of general economic concepts such as labor and productivity (Folbre & Hartmann 1988, Pujol 1992).

This thesis aims to develop a way of reading historical economic texts that acknowledges the various ways gender is constructed and reproduced in these texts. Thus, instead of focusing on explicit pronouncements on women's position and character, this thesis aims to show whether and how explicit and implicit use is made of old, tacit, contemporary or normative notions of masculinity and femininity, how these shaped the text and how they appear in reading these texts. Thus implicit and explicit concepts of masculinity and femininity will be indicated also in those texts in which women are hardly mentioned or not mentioned at all.

To be able to address the historical gender context of texts, and to adopt the historical and contextual approach intended, the work I intend to make use of includes research into the economic history of women - a topic that remained largely unexplored until the early 1970s.

Feminist economics

Feminist economics developed along similar lines to women's studies, except that the early work on women's economic position and discrimination came from conventional economists. After a period of silence on the issue of gender differences in the economy and the family, Gary Becker dealt with discrimination theory in the late fifties and addressed the economic processes within the family (Becker 1965). Jacob Mincer (1962) addressed the reappearance of married women on the labor market in the US at that time (see also Mincer & Polachek 1974). In their research Becker, Mincer and others address these matters from the perspective that it was especially the notion of 'the family under threat' and married women's participation on the labor market that required an explanation. They applied and adjusted neoclassical economics to theorize the behavior of married and single women as different from that of men. The choice some women made not to participate in the labor market or to take on a job for relatively low pay, was generally explained by their preferences, their human capital and by specific constraints linked to women's household responsibilities, which together produced elasticities differing from those of men.

Research from an explicitly feminist perspective was conducted on the economic position of women and dealt with the segregation of labor between women and men and the contribution of household labor to GDP (see e.g. Amsden 1980, Bruyn-Hundt 1970, Keynes (1986) and in his Great economists since Keynes (1985), there are only three women: one in the first volume (Rosa Luxemburg) and two (Joan Robinson and Irma Adelman) in the second.


At the end of the last century and the beginning of this century a considerable amount of research was conducted on the economic position of women and a critique was developed on the work of economists such as Edgeworth, Jevons and Marshall (see Pujol 1992). Some major contributors to these discussions were Beatrice Webb Potter, Margaret Cole, Beatrice Fawcett, and Elisabeth Bodichon. In the 1930s work was done on Household Economics by Hazel Kyrk, Margaret Reid and others in Chicago (see Feminist Economics, special issue 1996, Van Velzen 2001).
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Goldschmidt-Clermont 1982, 1987, Bergmann 1974, 1986, Blau & Ferber 1986). Issues such as differences in wages and employment between women and men and the function of household labor in a capitalist society were also analyzed (e.g. Hartmann 1976, Sargent 1981). In the 1970s and early 1980s, the Marxist framework was applied and criticized in the analysis of the contribution and valuation of household labor and in attempts to explain why it was mostly women who conducted unpaid household labor. Heidi Hartmann (1981) for instance indicated how, alongside the capitalist system, the patriarchal system works to keep women in their place.

The neoclassical approach was applied, but also criticized for its use of a joint utility function in the family (as in Samuelson 1956, Becker 1973), hampering the analysis of economic conflicts in the family (Amsden 1980). Others articulated more elaborate critiques and showed that Becker was wrong by introducing the possibility of divorce in a model based on more than one period, using a game-theoretical approach (Ott 1992, 1995). At the other end of the theoretical spectrum, Folbre (1991, 1993) for instance, criticized Marx for his neglect of women's labor in the household and the definition of class interests in 'terms of the interests of working-class men' (Folbre 1993, 102).

The main economic theoretical notions applied in these analyses thus appeared to contain all kinds of implicit gendered notions that limited their use and applicability in feminist research. In the late 1980s feminist economists started to analyze economic theory - Marxist, neoclassical as well as more institutionalist approaches to economics - from a feminist perspective (e.g. Kosonen 1989, Kuiper 1989, Nelson 1989, Strassmann & Polanyi 1989, Ferber & Nelson (eds) 1993). By the end of the 1990s feminist economics was a developing field in its own right (see Nelson 1995a, Hewitson 1999). It deals with issues ranging from development economics, measuring and investigating the interrelation between paid and unpaid labor, to more methodological and philosophical issues such as the construction and use of data (Hedman 1991, MacDonald 1995), and the development of a feminist epistemological and ontological perception of scientific knowledge (see e.g. Hewitson 1999, Lawson 1999, Barker & Kuiper forthcoming).

Addressing methodological issues, feminist economists such as Julie Nelson (1993b), Diana Strassmann (1993), Nancy Folbre (1993) and Janet Seiz (1993) indicate that the definition of central economic concepts such as rationality, production and labor are heavily value laden and are as such connected to specific conceptualizations of gender. Julie Nelson (1992, 1995b) indicates that as a basic metaphor, gender as a hierarchical and asymmetrical dualism has structured the economics discipline, the definition of its subject matter, its concept of agency and the dominance of formal reasoning. Diana Strassmann stresses the situatedness of human knowledge and shows the power of language in excluding the experiences of non-white-middle-class Americans by deconstructing economic discussions and texts (e.g. Strassmann 1993, Strassmann & Polanyi 1989 and 1995). I make grateful use of the way these last two authors focus on specific economic texts, although this thesis will apply alongside the textual also a more historical and contextual perspective. This is discussed more extensively in Chapter 4, which deals with the theoretical framework used in Part III and IV.
Positioning the researcher
Educated in and faced with an economic science that claimed gender neutrality, while at the same time predominantly articulating men's perspective on economic reality, I took up this topic from a masculine perspective. In order to begin, however, I had to make the shift to a feminist perspective so as to be able to ask the question of how economists deal with 'femininity', to read 'against the text' and to investigate how these texts addressed women and men, and usually excluded specific concerns perceived as linked to women alone.

During the course of this project, more and more literature became available, feminist economics evolved and gender issues gradually became something that could be raised in economic discussions, though better outside the discipline than inside. In these discussions, and backed up by an emerging scientific field in its own right, I learned to talk about these things in more general, scientific and less purely personal terms, and to explain and substantiate my arguments and findings.

During the research process, I thus made two main shifts. The first was from a masculine to a feminist perspective and later to a gender-aware perspective. The other was the shift from a critique pur sang on economic texts, towards a more open assessment of what I found, and then subsequently to constructive theorizing. I regard the willingness to broaden one's view by considering and including the perspectives of others in one's thinking as basic to science, and as a matter of strength; in other words, to aim for objectivity. This applies to mainstream economists as it does to feminist scholars: other perspectives (ethnic, class and masculine) should also be considered, and where relevant included.

There is at the moment a tendency towards 'mainstreaming' in science, including economic science that demands the inclusion and full integration of women in economics, whereas what is actually happening is no more than a restatement of the old gender neutrality claim. Considering these contextual characteristics, I still see it as important to approach these matters from an explicitly feminist perspective. For reasons of time, addressing the interrelation between gender, ethnicity and class in economics is postponed to later research.

1.4 Main concepts

Individuals are unique and the differences between human beings are practically infinite. Some of these differences are ascribed to the fact that we can distinguish between women and men. Though color of hair or eyes is not determined by sex, a relationship can be identified between sex and height, weight, strength and income. Whether this relationship is biologically determined or the result of cultural processes is the topic of what is called the 'nature/nurture debate'. Without aiming to resolve this issue here, this thesis investigates the way economists implicitly and explicitly take up a position in this debate. In this thesis the term sex differences is used to refer to the biological or genetic difference between women and men, as 'the small difference' to which social and cultural meanings are ascribed. The term gender differences refers to the social and cultural differences between women and men.

The revealed differences between women and men consist of sex differences and/or gender differences. In order to say anything sensible about the biological or cultural basis of differences between women and men, these differences first have to be empirically assessed as
differences for which sex difference is scientifically significant.\textsuperscript{10}

The focus will not be on the differences between women and men and whether these are biological or culture based. Instead it is on how economists think about these differences, how they make explicit use of perceptions of gender or apply these as tacit knowledge while constructing their economic arguments. Therefore the main analytical concepts used here address the differences between women and men at a meta-level; they enable us to discuss how people think or how to think about differences between women and men.

FIGURE 1.: LEVELS OF ABSTRACTION IN THE CONCEPTUALIZATION OF SEX AND GENDER DIFFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 2: Analytical concepts of Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analyzing the way people, or groups of people perceive gender</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 1: Perceiving gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>applying sex/gender distinctions and notions of masculinity and femininity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; biological concept , , , cultural concept &gt;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level 0: Human beings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'reality', women, men and other people</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thus the sex/gender distinction (the level of perceiving gender, in figure 1.) refers to the way and extent to which differences between women and men are conceived of as biological and/or as cultural and socially based. The biological concept of gender differences regards social, economic and physical differences as biological and thereby as explainable by the sex difference between women and men. Or to put it another way, the biological difference between women and men is linked to what are perceived as the respective roles of the male and the female in reproduction, and thereby to specific perceptions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'. Many have, for instance, 'explained' the sexual division of labor, the male domination of women, and the exclusion of women from science, by arguments of this kind.\textsuperscript{11}

By regarding differences (level 0 in figure 1) between women and men as biologically based, these differences tend to be understood as 'natural' and unchangeable and, therefore as something that can provide an explanation (level 1 in figure 1). Applying this biological

\textsuperscript{10} See also McCloskey & Ziliak 1996.

\textsuperscript{11} James McKeen Cattell stated in 1910: 'There are now nearly as many women as men who receive a college degree; they have on the average more leisure; there are four times as many women as men engaged in teaching. There does not appear to be any social prejudice against women engaging in scientific work, and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that there is an innate sexual disqualification.' (quoted in Rossiter 1982, 107)
concept of gender differences can thus be used to legitimate the inequality between women and men or to argue in favor of women by claiming women's characteristics as positive, as is done by some feminists (see e.g. Firestone 1970, Hartsock 1983).

When the biological concept of gender is seen as one end of the spectrum of sex/gender distinctions, the cultural concept of gender differences is at the other end (all at level 1). The cultural concept of gender conceives of differences between women and men as purely social and cultural constructs. Ann Oakley for instance, states: 'The biological specialization suggests other specializations, but the actual pattern of male and female activities will be devised by each society according to its beliefs about the reproductive functions of men and women, and these beliefs are culturally determined.' (Oakley 1972, 146-7) This cultural concept of gender differences - in contrast to the biological concept of gender differences - makes it possible to acknowledge the cultural and historical character of definitions of 'masculinity' and 'femininity'.

The sex/gender distinction must be distinguished from the perception of gender which does not so much address the importance of the biological vis-à-vis the cultural differences, but instead refers to the associations and images ascribed to masculinity and femininity. The perception of gender can thus be investigated both where a biological concept of gender differences is used and when a cultural concept of gender differences is applied.

I use the term hierarchical and asymmetrical gender concept to describe a specific form of perception of gender. 'Hierarchical' means here that the masculine pole is more highly valued than the feminine pole. 'Asymmetrical' means that the masculine pole is positively defined, whereas the feminine pole is defined as merely a negative opposite of the masculine pole. The masculine pole is stated as the norm, whereas the feminine pole then is defined as 'what-the-positive-pole-is-not'. An example is the term 'rationality', which is frequently associated with masculinity, versus its negative opposite 'irrationality'. The hierarchical and asymmetrical perception of gender is however, a specific and extreme perception of gender, whereas other forms and definitions are possible in which 'femininity' is more positively articulated and valued (see also Nelson 1992).

Some feminist theorists (e.g. Harding 1986, Scott 1986) see references to the hierarchical differences between women and men as a means to structure experience as a means to power. Others regard thinking in oppositions as a fundamental cognitive habit of the human mind, which has somehow become connected with an under-valuation of femininity (and women) in relation to masculinity (and men) (Nelson 1995b).

The action of constructing a gendered dichotomy or distinction in a text and subsequently choosing one of the sides in order to develop the argument further contains an element of valuation. When in a text the perspective of a man (vis-à-vis a woman) is taken and elaborated as generic, and/or the perspective of the masculine pole of a constructed dichotomy is articulated and furthered, 'a masculine perspective' is considered to have been taken. Where the perspective of the woman is taken, I speak of 'a feminist perspective'.

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12 Nelson defines gender as 'the associations, stereotypes, and social patterns that a culture constructs on the basis of actual or perceived differences between men and women.' (Nelson 1995b, 132)
14 It is the systematic devaluation of whatever is metaphorically understood as 'feminine' that Nelson identifies as sexism (Nelson 1995b, 7).
1.5 Preliminary method of analysis

In Chapters 2 and 3 the central questions of this thesis are further explained and elaborated by means of a textual analysis of two economic texts. In the way I deal with and analyze these I follow Vivienne Brown (1993, 1994) who stresses the importance of textual analysis in the philosophy and history of economics. This work lines up with the shift in literature studies that Culler (1983) reviews in his book. It is the shift in focus from the explication and appreciation of one single achieved meaning in a text - as imposed by the author - to attention for the reader as the point of focus where the unity of the text is produced (Culler 1983, 32-33).15

Textual analysis

In the next two chapters in which I read texts by Becker (1981) and Pencavel (1986), I start my analysis by following the text closely in order to see what kind of notions and references to gender are used. Meyer (1996) describes this as a process-directed approach, in which reading through the text is like 'following a road'. 'Reading experiences and meanings are accumulated and the light in which earlier reading experiences were perceived is constantly changed by later ones' (Meyer 1996, 76).

To indicate the use of sex/gender distinctions I address the use of the terms 'men' and 'women' and the way these are linked to 'real' people; are 'women' and 'men' and aspects associated with these terms (e.g. 'women are people who give birth and have responsibility for children') considered as empirical, theoretical concepts or as accepted notions?

The perception of gender that is linked to sex/gender distinctions applied in a text can generally be revealed by identifying the roles and features ascribed to the women and men in the text.

To analyze positions, relations and perspectives applied in texts, a few basic notions from narratology - the theory of storytelling - are useful and relevant here (see also Meyer 1996). There is the narrator, the voice that tells the story, and the focalizor, the one speaking, thinking or conceiving the experience described in the text. These two voices can be and often are the same one. In her analysis of Adam Smith's texts, Vivienne Brown (1993) makes use of Bakthin's distinction between a 'dialogic' discourse and a 'monologic' discourse. In the dialogic discourse there are various characters in whose voices the story is told. In a monologic discourse there is only one voice; the impersonal voice of the narrator or 'monologic' voice. In the dialogic discourse the aim is often to persuade, while the monologic or 'didactic discourse' aims to present the case as clearly as possible (Brown 1994).

By analyzing the positions of the narrator, the focalizor and other main characters, the interrelations in the text (between women and men) can be indicated. One can indicate hierarchical relations as, for instance, constructed by depersonification and by invisibilization. By stressing general 'abstract' features, while at the same time ignoring specific details that are thus considered of less relevance, differences can be made invisible. Similarity, identity

15 This shift in focus prompts Culler to ask: 'If the experience of literature depends upon the qualities of a reading self, one can ask what difference would it make to the experience of literature [...] if this self were, for example female rather than male?' (Culler 1983, 42)
and/or universality are often constructed in a text by stressing or just assuming shared experience.

A characteristic feature of the use or construction of a hierarchical and asymmetrical perception of gender is dualist reasoning. Dualist reasoning is the ordering of experience in two opposite poles, one of which is constructed as the norm and the other as deviation. Dualist reasoning differs from dialectic reasoning in that dialectic reasoning, whilst taking account of oppositions in reality, sets out the transcendence of the oppositions distinguished. Used in connection with sex/gender distinctions or perceptions of gender, dualist reasoning can also be a way to construct a position in the text from which subsequently a masculine or a feminist perspective is applied.

The use of a masculine or feminist perspective is here analyzed by first identifying the point of view - also literally - from which the argument in the text is made. Culler (1983) points out the possible effects on a woman reader, when she is assumed to identify with the perspective of a man applied in the text. In those cases in which the experience or reading in the text itself seems to be that of a man for whom, in Culler's words, 'girl-watching is the model of an experience of spirit, a woman reader, appealing in a similar manner to experience might give a different result: the experience of being watched, seen as a "girl", restricted, marginalized'. (Culler 1983, 44) Acknowledging the problems associated with stating women's experience as a given, Culler proposes to apply 'the hypothesis of a female reader', which he describes as 'an attempt to rectify this situation'. "Reading as a woman", according to Culler, 'can be understood as "to avoid reading as a man", to identify the specific defenses and distortions of male readings and provide correctives.' (Culler 1983, 54) 'Reading as a woman' will here be applied as a means of bringing to light the masculine perspective applied by the author and the perception of gender that goes with it.

In a text and in an account of the history of economic science, the approach can be what Brown characterizes as 'centrifugal' or 'centripetal'. The centripetal process by which a heterogeneous and heterodox range of voices is integrated into a unified discursive field is the process of canonization (Brown 1993, 69). Canonization in a text ascribes a coherent unified purpose to the author and to a set of authors. In an account of the development of economic thought, it fixes meanings of one or more texts from a contemporary perspective. Thus the presence of multiple voices (or 'heteroglossia') in texts and over a range of texts is made invisible. When canonization takes place from a masculine perspective, reading as a woman requires special attention for the centrifugal forces and the multiple voices of the text(s) and over a series of texts.

Empirical material
The empirical material for thesis, the material that is here the object of analysis, is a selection of pivotal economic texts written by great economists. The texts are analyzed in the form in which they were initially published and/or mostly used.

In part II I start with an analysis of A Treatise on the Family by Gary Becker (1981)

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16 Dualist reasoning is regarded by postmodernist scholars as a common feature of Modernist thought (see e.g. Foucault, Rorty). Feminists have stressed the gendered character of dualist reasoning and of the dichotomies which are based on it and indicate how the use of dichotomies links hierarchical valuations of 'masculinity' to 'femininity' (See e.g. Harding 1986, Keller 1985, Lloyd 1984, Bordo 1987, Hekman 1990, Plumwood 1993).
CHAPTER 1: CENTRAL QUESTIONS AND MAIN CONCEPTS

and 'The Labor Supply of Men: A Survey' by John Pencavel (1986). Becker's *Treatise* was and to some extent still is an influential as well as a controversial text. The book played a pivotal role in the economic debate on the family. It was one of the reasons Becker received the 1992 Nobel Prize.

'The Labor Supply of Men: A Survey' (1986) by John Pencavel is the first chapter of the *Handbook of Labor Economics*, a well-established handbook that is still frequently used in labor economics courses; as such it provides new scholars with an introduction to the field of labor economics. The analyses of these two texts together constitute Part II, more texts will be analyzed in Part III of this thesis.

1.6 Plan of the book

This thesis consists of four parts. Part I, as already indicated, contains Chapter 1, Part II contains Chapters 2 and 3. Part I and II together elaborate the central problem of the thesis. The main concepts and the textual approach outlined in Chapter 1 are applied in the analysis in Chapters 2 and 3. To show the reader how a feminist reading of an economic text can be conducted and what it brings to the fore, the use of sex/gender distinctions, perceptions of gender and the use of the masculine perspective are indicated in Becker (1981) and Pencavel (1986). Based on these readings, the limits of a textual analysis are described and discussed, and the central research questions are further elaborated.

Part III contains an analytical framework that allows for the historicity, the intertextuality and contextuality, of economic texts. This framework is developed in Chapter 4 and applied in Chapters 5 and 6. In Chapter 5 texts by Sir William Petty (1623-1687) and Adam Smith (1723 - 1790) are analyzed and Chapter 6 contains an analysis of texts by William Stanley Jevons (1835-1882) and Alfred Marshall (1842-1924).

In Part IV I return to the texts by Becker (1981) and by Pencavel (1986), this time making use of the analytical framework and findings from Chapter 5 and 6. Becker's latest edition of *A Treatise of the Family* (1991, enlarged edition) is also addressed as is the most recent volume of the *Handbook of Labor Economics* (1999). Chapter 7 thus more specifically evaluates the usefulness of the proposed framework, whereas Chapter 8, the concluding chapter, evaluates the findings of this thesis in general.