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in den politischen Machtstrukturen. Es wird jedoch keine konzeptionelle Einbindung der Geschlechterperspektive sichtbar, und es fehlt die Benennung von konkreten Aktionen. Entsprechend gibt es keine zeitlichen Vorgaben und erst recht keine Maßnahmen zur Messung möglicher Fortschritte.

Der Frauensicherheitsrat wird seine Arbeit fortsetzen – auch wenn Deutschland 2005 erst einmal keinen Sitz mehr im UN-Sicherheitsrat hat. Einer der nächsten Arbeitsschwerpunkte wird im Aufbau eines europäischen 1325-Frauennetzwerks bestehen. Denn Frauen aus unterschiedlichen Ländern haben die Idee eines Frauensicherheitsrates begeistert als eine mögliche Form zur Umsetzung von 1325 für ihr eigenes Land aufgenommen. Sie haben zugestimmt, an einem europäischem Netzwerk zu 1325 zu arbeiten, um gemeinsame Strategien zu entwickeln.

Weitere Infos unter www.glow-boell.de und www.peacewomen.org/

The darkest times and the urgent need for meta-politics

Interview with Nancy Fraser

femina politica: In his inaugural address on January 20, 2005 George W. Bush focussed again on values, moral and Christianity. These have been central in the election campaign; especially for the Republican election manager Karl Rove. What do you think about the second Bush administration?

Nancy Fraser: Speaking from the perspective of a feminist philosopher, who has been a radical activist in the past, I must say that this is the darkest period in my lifetime. It's a time of deep crisis in US society and political culture. It is hard to understand how this new hypernationalism and militarism have become so dominant. Surely it is not in "the national interest" of the United States to put ourselves into debt for many generations to come. It is equally clear that Bush's Iraq policy is a disaster and that nothing good is likely to come of it. So one question is: which exactly are the interests that control this government, and what do they think they are doing? A related issue is the political use of fear and of the trauma of 9/11, which was hijacked and instrumentalized – first of all, to build support for the invasion of Iraq; second, to present Bush in the recent electoral campaign as a strong leader and commander-in-chief who stays the course and does not change his mind; and finally, to legitimate heretofore unimaginable reversals of social entitlements and erosions of civil liberties. On this last point, Abu Ghraib is only the tip of the iceberg; there are many other reversals of hard-

won liberties, which taken together, add up to a covert but far-reaching structural transformation of the Constitution. And this is happening in a country that prided itself for so long for its strong civil liberties protections. But these changes are also connected with the so-called "cultural wars".

fp: One example of these "cultural wars" is the harsh effort to stigmatise homosexuality by disregard of gay marriage or clear statements against homosexuals in textbooks.

Fraser: The decisive issue in Ohio, which turned out to be the crucial state in the election, may have been gay marriage. This topic was deliberately chosen by conservatives for a ballot referendum as a strategy to ensure a high turnout of fundamentalist Christian voters. The theory was that once you got them to the polls to vote against gay marriage, then they would go ahead and also vote for Bush. And it seems to have worked. This may have tipped the balance in what was, after all, a very close race.

fp: Why is the issue of gay marriage or abortion so important for many Americans? Fraser: There is a significant irony here. The real tendencies that are making family life so difficult for the working and lower-middle classes stem from the neo-liberal, corporate capitalist agenda that Bush supports. These policies include reduced taxes on corporations and the wealthy, diminished social-welfare protections and very low wages and precarious employment. Thanks to these and related trends, it is no longer possible to support a family on one pay check – which means that women are increasingly obligated to enter the paid workforce; they are not necessarily there by choice. Moreover, many family members in the working and lower middle classes work at several jobs just to maintain a rather low standard of living, which some years ago they could have had with one wage only. Those are the real forces that are undermining family life in the United States. Democrats, or at least left Liberals, understand this, but they have not succeeded in convincing many who are harmed by these policies. On the contrary, the Right has managed to persuade them that it is abortion rights and gay rights that threaten their way of life.

fp: How do you explain this?

Fraser: Fraser: I believe that there is a disconnect between – if I could use my own philosophical terminology – the *politics of recognition*, on the one side, and the *politics of distribution*, on the other side. The right wing has used an anti-feminist and anti-gay politics of recognition to distract attention from their anti-working class politics of distribution. Thus, many people do not realize that under Bush there has been an enormous upward redistribution of wealth. For example, his government has eliminated inheritance taxes, lowered the tax rates of the wealthy, and generally flattened the tax schedule, which means that the working classes pay a far greater share than before. The effect is to turn the politics of redistribution upside down, to promote increased social *injustice*.

fp: Is this unequal distribution linked to the "fight against terrorism"? It seems as if questions of redistributions get less political attention.

Fraser: Yes, they are directly linked. Recall that in his first term George W. Bush inherited a very big budget surplus from Clinton. For the Republicans, a budget surplus represents a danger. Many of them said quite openly that they had to get rid of this surplus, so that the Democrats would be unable to fund social programmes, if and when they returned to power. Before 9/11, the main proposal was to cut taxes, especially for the rich. After 9/11, however, there was another, more effective way to get rid of the surplus: military spending for an unending war on terror! You also have to remember that on September 10th Bush was an illegitimate President who had come into office by virtue of decisions made by electoral officials in the state of Florida, where his brother is the Governor, and by virtue of a Supreme Court decision authored by a Justice who was appointed by his father. By September 12th, however, everything seemed to have changed. We have since learned that, within 24 hours of the attacks, key members of the administration decided to invade Iraq and to use 9/11 to legitimate vastly increased military spending, thereby ensuring that no future Democratic president would have the means to fund a national health insurance system.

fp: What are the implications for women in the US of the discourse on "re-traditionalisation" of family life promoted by the fundamentalist Christians? Is it intended that they withdraw from the labour market and become housewives?

Fraser: I don't believe that the aim is to get women to leave the paid workforce. The fact is that, despite their ideology, a great many evangelical women are in the labour market. So we have to understand a situation that appears contradictory. These women are in some ways quite empowered. They bring home a pay check; they may have a strong voice in their families and some real power in relation to their husbands. Thus, they are not actually living patriarchal lives. Nevertheless, they derive important sources of meaning and identity from their involvement in evangelical church groups, from which they also get an ideology that contradicts some important aspects of their lives.

fp: Can you explain this contradiction?

Fraser: I think it has to do with the new kind of society that is developing in the United States, which I would characterize as an "insecurity society." This society is the successor to the "welfare society" that was associated with social democracy in the previous period. Unlike the latter, the new society institutionalizes severe insecurity in the living conditions of most people. As I noted before, it abolishes social welfare protections, even as it institutionalizes much more precarious forms of wage labor, including subcontracting, temp work, and non-unionized work, which are low-waged and do not carry benefits. The result is a great sense of insecurity, to which evangeli-

cal Christianity responds. Interestingly, evangelicalism does not actually give people security. Rather, it gives them a discourse and a set of practices through which they can manage insecurity. It says to them: you are sinner, you are going to fail, you may lose your job, you may have an affair, your husband may leave you, your children may use drugs, and you may drink too much. But it is okay. God still loves you, and your church group still accepts you. The effect is to convey acceptance and also to prepare people for trouble. As I said, evangelicalism does not actually make its followers feel secure. On the contrary, it continually stokes their insecurity. But it gives them a way of coping with insecurity, even while constantly invoking it. Perhaps one needs the late Foucault to understand this: Evangelicalism is a care-of-self-technology that is especially suited to neoliberalism, insofar as the latter is always generating insecurity. As I said, many working-class women are deriving something significant from this ideology, something that confers meaning on their lives. We feminists have to try to understand what it is and how it works. We have to learn how to talk to them and to figure out what feminism could give them in its place.

fp: What could this "something" be?

Fraser: In the early days, second-wave feminism gave people a community. It changed their lives and gave them a whole new world of social relations. Women who became feminists found a new self-understanding and sisterhood. In struggle, they found solidarity and empowerment. Thus, far from being merely a matter of bread-and-butter economics, feminism brought meaning, and even nobility, to their lives. Today feminism no longer has much to do with such things. For some years now, it has become a species of interest-group politics, which means a type of politics-as-usual. Perhaps not all of feminism, but most of it, and this is how many people see it. And this gives the rightwing conservatives their opening to dismiss feminism as a piece of special-interest selfishness, aimed at smoothing the way for career women who are anti-family.

fp: Does Bush's politics have clear effects on feminism in the US and especially on the specific role of men in society?

Fraser: Feminism has been directly targeted by the Right in their "culture war", although as I noted, their social and economic policies have clear gender aspects, too. As for men, we are seeing the resurrection of old hyper-masculinist stereotypes, along with the invention of new ones. One example, which I mentioned before, is the image that Bush cultivated in the electoral campaign: that of a reassuringly steady and determined commander-in-chief, a protector who never doubts and never wavers – in short, a real man. In contrast, the Republicans presented John Kerry as – to use Arnold Schwarzenegger's memorable phrase – a "girlie man", an effeminate "flip-flopper" who could not be trusted to protect women and children. It seems to me that feminists need to understand the strategic manipulation of gender at this level, where it func-

tions as a code that is used to legitimate an administration whose policies are clearly anti-feminist. It is crucial that we figure out how to interrupt the functioning of this gender code, as it is current serving to destroy any possibility of social reforms that could empower women. The fact is that some 56 million Americans did vote for this man. And unlike in 2000, when Bush presented himself deceptively as a moderate and "compassionate conservative", who would be "a uniter, not a divider", those who voted for him in 2004 knew quite a lot about what he had done and what he would do. This is why I said at the outset that this is a very dark and frightening time.

fp: Have feminists failed to raise their voices during the election campaign?

Fraser: Not at all. Feminists worked very hard to defeat Bush, and there is no question that John Kerry – even if he was not an ideal candidate – would have been a far, far better alternative – for women, for Americans, and indeed for the world at large. Yet the social and the cultural processes that led to this result have been under way for a very long time. I have the impression, that feminists have been slow to realise the changing political climate in the United States. University feminists have lived in an "academic bubble" and have been very preoccupied with academic debates. Meanwhile, outside in a larger world, there have been deep changes in culture and society, which we did not fully grasp. Thus, although feminists did work hard in this election campaign, it seems to me that academic feminists have yet to figure out, how to give our very sophisticated academic work an accessible public face. In the early days of second-wave feminism and women's studies, we had a much easier time in connecting activism and intellectual work than we do now. We have allowed ourselves to become enclosed in an academic ghetto – where, it is true, we are doing very good work. But this election should convince us, how important it is that feminism be in communication with the broad historical and social developments of its time.

fp: Will we encounter a long period of right wing hegemony?

Fraser: It won't be easy to reverse this direction, because the more power the Republicans get – and they now have both Houses of Congress, most governorships, as well as the presidency and the whole executive branch – the more they use it to consolidate their power, to lock-in their policies, and to prevent future change. The most important example will be the Supreme Court. It is likely that Bush will appoint three relatively young Supreme Court Justices, which means that for the next 30 years now we could have an anti-choice Supreme Court[1], a Court that is pro-business, anti-civil rights, and anti-civil liberties. Such a Court could overturn not only reproductive rights but also all our anti-discrimination protections, just as the Conservatives on the current Court have succeeded in weakening constitutional protections against age and disability discrimination. I am afraid that we are in for a very long period of right wing hegemony. One can always hope that, if things go really badly, people will wake up. But a problem with that scenario is that when things go really badly, you don't necessarily get

emancipatory, democratic, social-justice oriented responses; you can as easily get authoritarian-populist and fascist responses – Germans know that very well. This is why I said that we are in a terrible crisis. Thus, it is time for feminists to think about how to intervene in the public sphere in a way that is not confined to so-called women's issues but addresses this bigger picture.

fp: In April 2004 the largest demonstration in history for women's rights took place in Washington DC with more than one million people – demonstrating against the Bush administration, against the restrictive politics concerning the right for abortion and other feminist issues. Do you consider this a single issue or as a sign for a longer protest wave against the neo-conservative politics of the Republican government?

Fraser: Feminists will certainly watch very closely the Supreme Court nominations as they come up. The biggest question is how hard the Democrats will oppose anti-choice nominees in the Senate, which has to confirm them. I expect that there will be large women's rights demonstrations aimed in part at bucking up the Democrats, encouraging them to fight. And if they lose and anti-choice judges are appointed, there will also be huge protests. This is absolutely necessary, but we should think about what comes next. This scenario will effectively sharpen the polarization in the country, even if it turns out that some Bush voters are really pro-choice and want to switch sides. But assuming that many of them are not, we need to figure out, how appeal to this other half of the country. I suspect that we will need a two-track approach, which focuses simultaneously on redistribution and recognition. We must at once defend a feminist politics of recognition (including abortion rights, gay rights, etc.) and develop a pro-working-class politics of redistribution, aimed at winning over some people who now vote Republican, even if they are anti-choice. It is a complicated situation; I keep thinking of the Weimar Republic, where the proliferation of strikes and demonstrations on all sides gave rise to a sense of social chaos, which then legitimized something far more worse. I am not saying that we are at that point now, but I think of those analogies, because for me it is not impossible that we are approaching a kind of proto-fascism. It is a hard word to use, but part of the problem is that we don't have the right words to describe this situation.

fp: What should feminists or other emancipatory groups do then?

Fraser: I would like to see more long-term strategic discussion and intellectual analysis. For all the current activism, which was very impressive during the elections, we lack an ongoing process of political discussion, reflection, and analytical thinking among feminists and leftists in general. In the 1960s and 70s, there existed membership-directed groups, which engaged regularly in such discussion. Today, in contrast, we have internet groups, NGOs, and organisations that are run by paid staff; they raise money and organize demonstrations but they do not provide a forum where people regularly communicate and reflect on the larger picture and what we should be doing in

light of it. What we need now are organisations that are dedicated to some real intellectual work such as analysing the situation and thinking about how to insert ourselves into this process.

fp: You are currently working on a new book about "Postnational Democratic Justice" which aims to broaden your two-dimensional concept of justice into a three-dimensional concept. Why is this broadening necessary?

Fraser: In recent years, I defended a two-dimensional conception of justice centered on redistribution and recognition. I argued in effect against two different sets of political opponents. One set clung to the economistic idea that united vulgar-Marxists and many social democrats: "It is the economy stupid." Their politics treated recognition issues as sheer false consciousness. Finding that approach highly inadequate, I argued that recognition was a fundamental dimension of social justice, which couldn't be reduced to redistribution. At the same time, however, I was convinced that the fascination with identity politics that swept across the United States and much of the rest of the world in the 1980s was just as one-sided. So I coined the idea that, just as feminists developed a critique of economism, so we also needed a critique of culturalism. Culturalism is the idea that all injustices stem from the structure of the symbolic order (to use the Lacanian term) or from the hierarchical ordering of identities. That approach effectively treats the economy as a mere superstructure of culture. Rejecting that view, I argued that distribution, too, was a fundamental dimension of justice, which couldn't be reduced to recognition. In response to the perceived inadequacy of both positions, then, I developed a two-dimensional theory of justice that incorporated both redistribution and recognition. Following the publication of this work in *Justice Interruptus* and *Umverteilung oder Anerkennung*? (with Axel Honneth), a lot of people said to me: "Well, you have economy and you have culture, but where is the political?" My response was always: "Oh no, this is all political". At the time, I did not feel the need for a distinctive third axis of justice that would correspond to the political. But recently, as I began to reflect more deeply on the problems raised by globalisation, I have come to see that my previous theory (like that of many other philosophers and critical theorists) took for granted that we already knew what the appropriate unit for thinking about justice was. Although I have always been aware of imperialism and broader global issues, I failed explicitly to raise the question "What is the appropriate unit for framing questions of justice?" The effect was to suggest, as if by default, that the frame within which justice applied was the modern territorial state. Today, however, in the wake of the new struggles over globalisation, that answer is no longer plausible, and the question of the frame can no longer go without saying. Now we must ask explicitly, which is the appropriate unit for thinking about issues of justice? And who are the appropriate subjects, the people who are entitled to a just distribution of resources or reciprocal recognition and status equality? Today, in other words, we can no longer assume without discussion that they are (only) our fellow citizens. Once I came to re-

alize this, I decided that I needed a third dimension of justice, alongside redistribution and recognition, a dimension that I call "representation". Representation in my sense furnishes the stage on which struggles over distribution and recognition are played out. It determines who counts as a bonafide participant in such struggles, whose interests must be considered, and whose voices must be heard. Thus, I have found it necessary to distinguish two different levels of the politics of representation. The first I call "ordinary-political representation", which concerns the struggle for equal voice within an already given political frame. The second I call "meta-political" representation, which concerns struggles to determine the frame. I am trying to figure out what representation would mean, if we sought to democratize our procedures for answering such meta-political questions. Currently, then, I am working to expand my earlier two-dimensional theory into a three-dimensional theory, encompassing redistribution, recognition and representation. I am paying special attention to the meta-political level and the problem of the frame, as the key to thinking about justice in a globalizing world. I am only at the very beginning of this work. I am very pleased to be spending the academic year here at the Wissenschaftskolleg in Berlin, where I hope to get a good start on a new book.

fp: I look forward to reading it. Thank you very much for the interview.

Das Interview führte *Alexandra Scheele* im Januar 2005 am Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.

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Anmerkungen

1 In 1973 the Supreme Court in the USA has decided a general right for abortion in the USA. Some observers are now expecting this right to be abolished in the following four years as already four of the nine members in the Supreme Court do not longer support it and two or three judges are retiring and being replaced by conservative judges – as a remuneration from the government to their supporters during the elections.