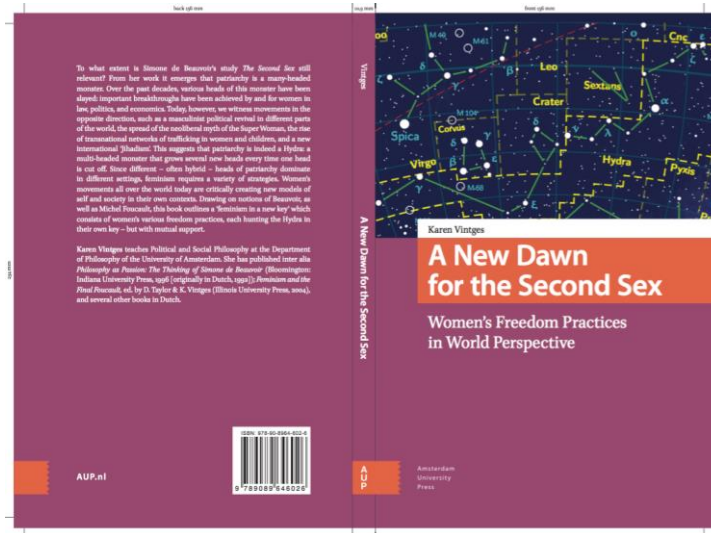


VINTGES, Karen. A New Dawn for the Second Sex: Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective. Amsterdam University Press, 2017



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The book *A New Dawn for the Second Sex: Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective* of Karen Vintges (a University Lecturer in Political and Social Philosophy in the Department of Philosophy at the University of Amsterdam), highlights the analogy between Simone de Beauvoir's legendary essay *The Second Sex* (1949) and women's practices today. Its great thematic relevance is demonstrated in two possibilities of reading the title, referring on the one hand to the necessity to take up again Beauvoir's famous study in an updated fashion in contemporary society; on the other hand, to the plurality of creative practices of women beyond eurocentrism.

Since her earliest publications, such as *Philosophy as Passion: The Thinking of Simone de Beauvoir* (1996); *Feminism and the Final Foucault* (2004); *Women, Feminism and Fundamentalism* (2007), and several other books in Dutch and some academic articles published

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in journals in the USA and other countries, Vintges has shown her seriousness toward feminist research and its openness to dialogue with other cultures, especially, Muslim. The difficulties many Western groups have shown in analyzing and understanding Muslim culture, in its various shades, do not find room in the research and books of Karen Vintges. On the contrary, she shows sensitivity and intelligence in dealing with the dialogical relations between cultures.

Her book interacts in a very innovative way with the thinking of Simone Beauvoir and Michel Foucault. Vintges's study departs from Foucault's perspective that "Western philosophy should revise its concepts and perspectives in the context of our globalized world". Beauvoir's and Foucault's methodological concerns are taken up as a way of enabling new theoretical and practical views on the issues of feminism.

Addressing the question to what extent Simone de Beauvoir's study *The Second Sex* is still relevant today, Vintges argues that patriarchy turns out to be a "many-headed monster". Over the past decades, various heads of this monster have been slayed: important breakthroughs have been achieved by and for women in law, politics, and economics. Various heads of the monster however remain. In her book Vintges even argues that patriarchy is a sneaky monster like a Hydra: "A multi-headed monster that grows several new heads every time one head is cut off". How to face its power? Since different—often hybrid—heads of patriarchy dominate in different settings, "feminism requires a variety of strategies". Women's movements all over the world today are critically creating "new models of self and society in their own contexts". Drawing on notions of Simone de Beauvoir, as well as Michel Foucault, this book outlines a "feminism in a new key," which consists of women's various freedom practices, each hunting the Hydra in their own key— but with mutual support (VINTGES, 2017: 86).

The author argues that Foucault's and Beauvoir's works on ethics show some remarkable parallels that allow us to finally synthesize their approaches in such a concept of ethical 'freedom practices', i.e. of distinct sets of critically creative ethical life projects. These are coined in terms of some core characteristics, like "freedom in terms of an ethical practice", concerning "one's visible behavior and acting in the world", involving "a critique of any domination", and "creation' in the sense of an "art of life", all in all referring to "the concrete projects of groups of individuals and of individuals within them".

The author's concept of freedom practices thus refers as well to collective level, in terms of identifiable and distinct relatively independent ethical communities, groups or networks offering self- techniques, and models for creating a concrete ethical way of life. But it also involves the personal level, in the sense of the creation of a personal ethos in such a context, as Vintges writes (VINTGES, 2017: 47-48).

Her book certainly provides her readers with profound and relevant issues for the present era, especially for the refinement of the dialogical dimension between cultures and the various customs outlined in her book.

[The book by Karen Vintges, *A New Dawn for the Second Sex. Women's Freedom Practices in World Perspective*, is available either in print, for who enjoys this medium, or as a e-book.]