This licentiate thesis has looked at the problematic aspects of the relationship of men and feminism. This was done using the concept of ideological dilemmas with a discourse analytical approach. The research material was a Finnish e-mail list, Man-list and discussions about men and feminism or feminists in the years 1997-2002. The Man-list is a discussion list and part of the Finnish men’s movement. The writers are mainly men who are researchers on men and masculinities or activists. The theoretical frame of reference was social constructionism and a combination made from three traditions of critical research.

The analysis was divided to two chapters. The first chapter clarified the context of the list for discussing feminism and the second chapter focuses on the ideological dilemmas found on the list. During the years investigated discussions about feminism happened in a feminist-positive atmosphere. Part of the writers identified as feminists or profeminists. This result shows as myth the claim that the relationship of men and feminism is always antagonistic. Feminism was mainly written about as if it was one unitary thing.

Two ideological dilemmas were identified. The other was about whether men should posit themselves as subjects of feminism. The other concerned the attitude of the men’s movement towards men: should emphasis be give to supporting men’s pride or being critical towards men. After locating the dilemmas their presented solutions and interpretations of their possible ideological consequences were discussed.

With the help of these dilemmas the question motivating the work was discussed. How to increase men’s constructive involvement in gender equality work? It seems that positing men as subjects of feminism might increase men’s involvement. But at the same time this could mean that feminism’s focus would shift more towards dealing with the problems men experience and away from dealing with themes difficult for men (such as violence).


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