

Love Power and Political Interests. Towards a Theory of Patriarchy in Contemporary Western Societies

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Abstract

Men's power positions vis-à-vis women persist, even in contemporary Western societies where formal equality is combined with various welfare-state arrangements which obviously benefit women and where women are relatively independent, socio-economically, of individual men. The central question of *Love Power and Political Interests* is how this historically specific form of patriarchy is to be analysed and explained. Feminist theory, particularly its socialist feminist variant, is criticized and an alternative approach is developed. The main point of criticism is that socialist feminists have not taken the issues raised by radical feminism seriously enough, they have clung too closely to the classical Marxist problematic and, thus, have been unable to use the potential inherent in historical materialism for feminist theory. It is suggested that feminism must transcend the field of political economy, class and work, and instead focus on 'political sexuality', gender relations and the practice of love. However, it is not sexual violence which is fundamental in the reproduction of male power; it is rather love, freely given and taken. Patriarchy is maintained basically through unequal transactions of socio-sexual power, and the institution of marriage is central in keeping this process going. The core of the theory is constructed around a specific kind of exploitation, one where men exploit women's loving capacities.

Furthermore, a theory of interest is developed which establishes a theoretical space that allows both for women's common concerns and their different needs and preferences.

Key words: Political Theory, Social Theory, Feminist Theory, Theory of Interest, Historical Materialism, Marxist Method, Patriarchy, Gender Relations, Sexuality, Love, Power, Politics.