

BRIEF EXPLANATION OF PATRIARCHY

PATRIARCHY

Patriarchy is the primary construct on which all present-day society stands. In an attempt to define it, we could say patriarchy is a form of political, economic, religious and social organisation based on the idea of male authority and leadership and comprising the predominance of men over women, husband over wife, father over mother and their children, and the paternal line of descent over the maternal one. Patriarchy arose out of a historical taking of power by men, who appropriated the sexuality and reproduction of women and their offspring – their children – and at the same time created a symbolic order through myths and religion in order to perpetuate it as the only structure possible.

The patriarchal order creates an imposture based on the principle of the Absolute Masculine (the Only One) in which woman is excluded. Therefore, the history of the human race as it has been written and interpreted is only a partial record, and omits the past of half of humanity. Women too have “made history”, although there is no record of it, beyond what today’s women have retrieved. Women have been systematically excluded from the task of elaborating systems of symbols, philosophies, sciences and laws.

It should be emphasised that **at present there are several substantially different degrees of patriarchal oppression**, depending on the evolution and development of each society in history, paralleled by its greater or lesser acceptance or respect for the Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed and proclaimed by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948.

Within the analysis of patriarchy, there are **four obvious but important points** to take into account:

1. Patriarchy is not WRITTEN in our society

As patriarchy is a tacit institution, not a WRITTEN one such as the Code of Hammurabi, the Ten Commandments, the Koran, or the Constitutions of modern states, it does not prevail in the universal collective memory. In other words, its existence becomes invisible and is therefore kept aside from memory and the educational task memory performs.

Thus, the word “patriarchy” – like the concept – is excluded from usual language. It almost never issues from the mouths of philosophers, politicians and so on, precisely because it does not form part of convention.

Feminism is the antithesis of patriarchy, but not of androcentrism, despite the fact that this meaning is widely accepted. Feminism is a social and political movement that differs from the patriarchal project. It seeks an overall change of paradigm, with alternatives of human development and freedom for women and men alike. Clearly, both in this century and in the latter decades of the 20th, it has constituted one of the greatest revolutions of all time, socially, politically and culturally. Furthermore, it is the only one to have been carried out without violence.

2. Maleness is HEGEMONIC: Objectivisation of male domination

The universalisation of the male ego is one of the foundations of patriarchal domination. Its hegemonic maleness affirms its objectiveness.

Man is presented as a neutral, objective term, a universal subject that phagocytises woman. In the process of formation of this order, man has built a narcissistic world created in his own image, and at the same time this generates the pathology of “one” and “the other” pole of sexual difference. This symbolic devaluation of women in relation to “the other” is one of the fundamental metaphors of most of the world’s civilisations.

The concepts of virility and lineage are linked to the concept of honour versus women's virginity. Most violence against women originates from this.

Such current and universal problems as woman battering and "honour" killings will not be solved definitively without first eradicating the core that generates them, although it is important not to underrate all the preventive policies and laws on this issue that are being applied and are also necessary.

Through "cultural survivals", this subordination of women is seen as **natural** and thus becomes invisible. This naturalisation has been institutionalised and regulated.

The symbolic and structural violence that is conveyed in the patriarchal society as "the cultural inadvertent" or "collective unconscious" through philosophy, myths, religions, science and so on serves to legitimise the acknowledged universal presence of its social, productive and reproductive structures, which are built on the division of the sexes. The sum total of standards and values that predominate in a given society, incorporated into its institutions, are translated into human relationships.

3. The primary core of hierarchical relationship is UNIVERSALISED

The imbalance existing in the primary man-woman hierarchy is the core that generates the rest of the social pathologies. The categorisation between "superior" and "inferior" translated into "man" and "woman" spreads through mimicry to other groups, on the basis of the hierarchised difference between "one" and "the other".

The first discrimination is therefore the matrix that allows all the other discriminations, and at the same time they all contain the first. In each opposing class or group, woman is also oppressed by man.

When nature is ravaged, man flees nonsensically. His predatory act causes the patriarchal order to branch out to unspeakable dimensions. And in this ever-accelerating predatory act, no account is taken of its cultural and environmental impact.

As patriarchy is an agonistic society (i.e., one given to struggle and confrontation), the end it seeks is a hegemony of a pyramidal nature.

4. Patriarchy IS NOT IMMOVABLE

Patriarchy has been tacitly present in human civilisation for thousands of years. It took shape before the formation of private property and the class society. It originated in a given period, after earlier societies that some historians call “matriarchal”, although they were not the opposite of patriarchal ones. This is not the place to discuss them, but we should nevertheless mention them in passing to **counteract** the idea of patriarchy as something ahistorical, invisible, eternal and unchangeable, and therefore immovable. On debating this obvious statement, it becomes clear that insofar as patriarchy is a cultural and social convention, it is subject to rectification, reform or replacement with a different cultural and social construct.

If we want to change and replace this patriarchal order and take away the veil of invisibility from the logic of domination which acculturates **dominator and dominated alike**, we need to take two important steps: first that of naming/recognition, and then that of exegesis. In practice, this would mean

- 1) Accepting its existence, making it WRITTEN instead of TACIT.
- 2) EXPLAINING and disseminating it.

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