

XIII Theses of Marxism- Feminism



I Marxism-Feminism are two sides of one coin, as Helen Colley emphasises, but it must be added that this coin itself requires transformation. Feminist Marxism holds firmly on to Marx's legacy, and thus to the significance of the analysis of work in the form of wage labour and as the driving force of the workers' movement (as Gayatri Spivak insists).

However, in the attempt to move the remaining female activities likewise into the centre of the analysis, MF shifts the question of the domestic and non-domestic activities from the paralysing attempts to think them either completely as one or, vice versa, as completely apart (dual economy debate, domestic labour debate), into the fundamental challenge of occupying and transforming the concept of relations of production for feminist questions.

II Thereby two productions are assumed (as Marx and Engels had already done), that of life and that of the means of life. The two are then related to each other, so that it is possible to examine individual practices and how they interact. This opens up an enormous field of research, in which specific modes of domination may be investigated and possibilities of transformation can be sought in different historically and culturally specific ways.

III It is clear that gender relations are relations of production, not an addition to them. All practices, norms, values, authorities, institutions, language, culture, etc., are coded in gender relations. This assumption makes feminist Marxist research as prolific as it is necessary. The contemporaneity and connectedness within global relations, and the simultaneous heterogeneity of historically concrete kinds of women's oppression require international activists bring together their knowledge and experiences.

IV Marxism is not useful for capitalist society and its academic disciplines that legitimise domination. Since Marxism-Feminism assumes (like Marx, Luxemburg, Gramsci, Brecht et al.) that humans make their own history (themselves) – or, where they are prevented from doing so, self-empowerment must be gained –, it is unsuitable for a structure of topdown commands.

This makes available research such as memory work as well as the historical-critical treatment of oneself in the collective, thus also self-criticism as a force of production.

V That all members of society must participate in relations of domination in order to act necessitates concrete study of those knots of domination that paralyse or shackle the desire for change in capitalist patriarchy. Feminists have the advantage here of having fewer of the privileges that come with participating in power, they therefore have less to lose, as well as more experience in viewing the world from below.

VI All members of capitalist society suffer the damage sustained in these relations of domination/subjection; and to that extent, no one is close to living in a liberated society. In our present, there are historically sedimented forms of domination and violence, which can't be reduced to one continuous path of development or a central contradiction. The savage forms of violence (against women), of brutalisation, readiness for war, etc. (on which Zillah Eisenstein focused) are to be grasped as the historically disparate horrors stemming from old relations. For Marxist feminists, these violent relations have to be a fundamental theoretical and practical part of their struggle for liberation, and the struggle for the attainment of the status of subjects over and against male-human underdevelopment.

But violence is not just an expression of traditional and outdated relations, but also of relations produced at present. That is why a specific understanding of critique and analysis is needed which avoids essentialisms. – The most brutal forms of violence have returned as horrors from relations we thought of as overcome and which are products of present relations at the same time.

VII Marxism-Feminism takes a position on the primacy of the labour movement as a historical subject and agent of transformation. Bringing feminism into Marxism, and thereby changing the latter as well as the former, makes a critical view of traditional Marxism indispensable, which refers solely to the labour movement. Marxism is Marx's critique of political economy + labour movement – that makes its incomparable strength. It also makes its limitations visible. The fate of the working class also shows its inability to recognise and to further develop questions that transcend the historical horizon of class struggles. This traditional Marxism is neither receptive for the new feminist questions nor for those of ecology, therefore we must keep working on it (as Rosa Luxemburg clearly pointed out). The wealth of the various movements as well as the still unused wealth in Marx's cultural heritage require continued working into the present. This is a challenge for all Marxist feminists, there's a consensus in nearly all contributions.

VIII The controversy over race, class, and sex/gender (intersectionality) should be taken further. The connection between class and sex in all societies seized by capitalism is to be investigated in detail; what appears as "race question" is to be answered concretely for each society and culture separately and to be related to the two other kinds of oppression (as Ann Ferguson and Gayatri Spivak emphasise). Nonlinear thinking is necessary.

IX The dismantling of the Western welfare state in a globalised economy leaves rapidly globalised economy and driving people into more and more precarious conditions, women are among those that lose out, just as other marginalised practices and groups.

X In the upheavals since the crisis of Fordism, manifest in the series of crises of the the care for life to women in unpaid domestic work or in low-paid wage work, something that can be experienced in the global care-chain. We can conceive of this as "care crisis", as a necessary consequence of a capitalist society, which in the shift of its economic centre to services gets into a profit squeeze, while it seizes on ever more barbaric forms of handling the crises through unequal creation of value levels (as Tove Soiland suggests).

XI Common to us all is to move life into the centre of our struggles (among others Montserrat Galcerán, Lise List) and thus the struggles for collectively self-determined time. We can also follow the suggestion to analyse the crises around life as the consequence of unequal time logics within hierarchically organised areas (Frigga Haug). As a politics Haug suggests the four-in-one perspective, i.e. to let policy-making be led by the disposition of time, thereby not to adapt the areas to each other, but to free them from hierarchy through generalisation. Only when all are active in all areas a liberated society shall be possible.

XII Our struggles are directed against domination and radically democratic – this requires also politics from below. Our resistance is situated culturally and temporally in different ways. But we are in union with Marx, "to overthrow all relations in which man is a debased, enslaved, forsaken, despicable being". To organise a Marxist-Feminist Conference, and to reflect our modes of cooperation and conflict within it, is a means to translate our resistance into the development of a continuous Marxist-Feminist movement.

XIII Marxist feminists do no longer remain in the position the labour movement ascribed to them, by virtue of division of labour, as women embodying peace and being made responsible for keeping it, while men continue waging wars. We refuse being reduced to this politics but want to bear responsibility for the whole. In the current global situation, characterised by crises and wars, we consider feminist power as indispensable. We bear responsibility and have powerful possibilities.