

Origin of Engels' *The Origin*: A Reappraisal in the Light of *The Ethnological Notebooks of Marx*

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ABSTRACT: Engels had based his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* on Marx's ethnological notebooks. In this paper, I want to place the roots of Engels' book in Marx's notes and reveal the various contributions of Marx to it. Marx's notebooks provided both the motivation and the initial source material, and Engels' life-long cooperation with him also contributed to this work. However, there are some significant divergences between Engels' work and that of Marx. I will focus only on the differences related to the rise of the patriarchal family. Marx's notebooks on ethnology are published under the title *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*. Since it is much less known compared to Engels' book, I also would like to highlight it in the paper.

KEYWORDS: Engels, Marx, ethnological notebooks, patriarchy, socialist feminism.

INTRODUCTION

After more than one hundred years of its first publication, Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (*The Origin*, hereafter) is still relevant for Marxists and socialist feminists.

Engels had based his book on *Ancient Society*, a classical work published in 1876 by the American ethnologist Lewis H. Morgan. He had been acquainted with this book via Karl Marx's notebook on the subject. After Marx's death, while working on the manuscripts he left behind, these notes aroused Engels' interest; making use of them, he began to write *The Origin* to fulfil the bequest of Marx. Engels concluded:

My work can offer but a meagre substitute for that which my departed friend was not destined to accomplish. However, I have before me, in his extensive extracts from Morgan, critical notes, which I reproduce here as far as they refer to the subject in any way. (Engels 2010a, 131)

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Engels completed his book in two months and published it in 1884. However, it took 89 years for the publication of Marx's ethnological notebooks, including the one on Morgan, until Lawrence Krader transcribed and published them with the title *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*. Marx's notebooks on ethnology are among the most important of his unpublished works and consist of excerpts and commentaries compiled between 1879 and 1882.

The Origin and the *Ethnological Notebooks* originate from the same source. Krader (1973a, 238) notes, "Its [*The Origin*'s] genesis is closely related to the *Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx* upon the identical source work". Marx's influence on *The Origin* is probably much deeper than that, as is seen throughout Krader's Introduction to Marx's work. In this paper, I want to underline this connection and, carrying Krader's idea a little further, try to reveal the various contributions of Marx to Engels' *The Origin*. First, Marx's notebook provided both the motivation and the initial source material for *The Origin*. Second, Engels' life—long cooperation with Marx also contributed to this work. Engels had already discussed with Marx some of the arguments he would later develop in *The Origin*. For example, in one of his letters to Marx, we come across one of the principal claims of *The Origin*: The social status of women is determined by their contribution to social production. More importantly, the methodology Engels offers in *The Origin* depends on *The German Ideology*, co-written by Marx and Engels decades ago. In the Preface to *The Origin*, Engels (2010a, 131) suggests a "new" perspective to examine social production as a whole, since according to the materialistic conception, the determining factor in history is, in the final instance, the production and reproduction of the immediate necessities of life. Here he takes reproduction as important as production—a conception that is a reformulation of the much earlier one in *The German Ideology*. Doing so, he provides a ground for social reproduction theory, a recent socialist feminist approach that combines production and reproduction.

Placing the roots of *The Origin* in Marx's notes is the first point I want to posit in this paper. To illustrate Marx's contribution, I will review the process of Engels' writing of *The Origin*, which has so far been described only partially (Rosemont 1989; Ward Gailey 2003; Cohen et al. 2010b). In this way, I will have the opportunity to investigate the development of some of Engels' arguments, early forms of which can be found in their joint work or correspondence.

However, there are some significant divergences between Engels' work and that of Marx. I will focus only on the differences related to the rise of the patriarchal family. Researchers have referred to the various issues on which they differ. Some highlight the differences in their attitude to Morgan and claim that Marx was more sceptical and less impressed with his conclusions (Krader 1973a; 1974). Some point to their methodological differences and argue that while Marx's notebooks depend on a dialectical perspective, Engels was less dialectical (Krader 1974, 82; Fluehr-Lobban 1979; Dunayevskaya 1991, 177–78; Levine 1973, 26). Besides, according to some scholars, Marx had a multi-linear approach, but Engels had a unilateral one (Krader 1973a; Anderson 2002, 90). Here, I will focus only on the differences related to the rise of the patriarchal family. In the third part of this paper, I will briefly discuss Engels' famous contention about the "world-historic defeat of the female sex."

Engels claims women have always been oppressed since the transition from the matriarchal family to the patriarchal one, that is, since their "world-historic defeat", because of the establishment of private property. Since Engels' *The Origin*, Marxists have generally accepted that patriarchy, or male domination, has emerged with the rise of private property within class society. Although it is an important achievement for Engels to point out as early as 1884 that the oppression of women is not a natural but historical phenomenon, later developments in anthropology have not supported his assertion of an early matriarchal phase in human history (Gough 1971, 761; Leacock 1974, 21; Fluehr-Lobban 1979, 343). Besides, Engels' claims have been criticized by several studies. First, many scholars state that most of Engels' claims were challenged by the developments in anthropology (see Stern 1948; Gough 1971; Fluehr-Lobban 1979; Aaby 1977). Many researchers question the concentration of private property in the hands of men and argue against Engels' explanation of the transition to patriarchal family with men's desire to pass their wealth to their children (Humphries 2009; Trat 1998; Weikart 1994). Most of these critiques, especially written from a feminist viewpoint, do not refer to the connection between *The Origin* and Marx's notebook.¹ Yet Engels' thesis about the transition to patriarchal family creates one of the boldest differences between the two works. Engels explains the emergence of the patriarchal family with private property, while Marx extends the roots of patriarchy to

1. See, e.g., articles on *The Origin* in the book edited by J. Sayers, M. Evans and N. Redclift in 1987. However, in a recent article, Frigga Haug (2015) mentions Marx's work.

communal ownership characteristic of primitive societies. I will refer to the *Ethnological Notebooks* to show how Engels' approach differs from that of Marx on the so-called "world-historic defeat of women". This may provide us with an idea of the difference between the general perspectives of Marx and Engels in their own works—i.e., the *Ethnological Notebooks* and *The Origin*. More importantly, it can shed new light on the debate on the origin of patriarchy, one of the most important topics of socialist feminist theory.

The Ethnological Notebooks is evidently much less known compared to Engels' *The Origin*. Therefore, in the second part, I will try to expand on Marx's *Notebooks*. It is indeed an unfinished work; however, it contains the substance of Marx's late writings and suggests that Marx was preparing for a new project. As many scholars state, in his later years, Marx turned to his earlier ideas, especially on the male-female relations and the family, and evaluated the transformations taking place in social organizations with their effects on women (Rosemont 1989; Dunayevskaya 1991, 190; Chattopadhyay 1999, 68; Anderson 2002, 90). It opens a new way of analyzing societies—not only pre-capitalist societies but also present bourgeois and the future ones—from a broader perspective to consider the family and sexuality, that is, a point of view that suggests including gender alongside class. Likewise, it can provide new vistas for socialist feminists to explain the sources of the oppression of women and for the possibilities of women's emancipation.

THE MAKING OF ENGELS' *THE ORIGIN*: THE "CONTRIBUTION" OF MARX

Engels began to write *The Origin* just after he discovered the ethnological notebooks of Marx. Having seen the one on Morgan, he thought that Marx had intended to write a book on *Ancient Society*, and then decided to carry out this work by himself. However, in fact, we do not know Marx's exact intentions about this study.

Engels also made use of the broad knowledge on the history of Rome, Ireland, and the Ancient Germans compiled in his own studies such as *Anti-Dühring* and his early writings with Marx—*The Holy Family*, *The German Ideology*, and the *Communist Manifesto*. His earlier works (both his own works and those written collaboratively with Marx) also signify that Engels was interested in gender issues all his life. For example, in the *Anti-Dühring*, published in 1878, Engels included some comments on women,

the family, and the reproduction of the working class, which generally recapitulate his own and Marx's earlier analyses and positions and approve of Fourier's critique of the relations between the sexes and of women's position in capitalist society. He referred to primitive and ancient communities and mentioned common ownership of the land as the origin of private property. Their conversations and debates in his correspondence with Marx also seem to have contributed to his erudition hence to the writing of *The Origin*.

Besides, his methodological perspective of combining production with reproduction reflects an earlier conception from the *German Ideology*.

Marx's Notebook on Morgan

After Marx's death, in "rummaging through" Marx's manuscripts, Engels found a notebook consisting of a detailed 98-page summary of Morgan's *Ancient Society*.² Engels might not have known about Marx's study on Morgan when he discovered this notebook. However, a few months after Marx's death, he remembered Marx had recommended *Ancient Society* to him: "Marx mentioned it, but my head was full of other things at the time, and he never referred to it again, which was, no doubt agreeable to him wishing as he did to introduce the book to the Germans himself" (letter to Kautsky, 16 February 1884) (Marx and Engels 2010f, 102).³ Here Engels attributed Marx's failure to mention Morgan's book again to his planning of a study himself on it on his own. In the Introduction to *The Origin*, Engels repeats his idea that Marx was planning to write a book on *Ancient Society*:

It was no less a person than Karl Marx who had planned to present the results of Morgan's researches in connection with the conclusions arrived at by his own—within certain limits I might say our own—materialist investigation of history and only thus to make clear their whole significance. (Engels 2010a, 131)

In the meantime, Marx's detailed notes on Morgan aroused Engels' excitement, and he decided to study the subject by himself. At first, he thought to write a feuilleton for *Sozialdemokrat* or the *Neue Zeit* from Marx's

2. Note that a single page of Marx's very minuscule handwriting is the equivalent of a minimum of 2,2 pages of print, as David Ryazanov, the founder of the Marx-Engels archive in Soviet Russia, explained (see Dunayevskaya 1991, 177–78).

3. When he first saw the notebook, Engels thought Marx was planning to write a book on Morgan's work; this could easily be seen "from his very exhaustive extracts", he wrote. It indeed contains the most detailed excerpts among the ethnological notebooks of Marx. The editors of the *Collected Works*, for example, write that Marx had himself planned to write on the subject (Cohen et al. 2010b, xx).

notes, but gave up the idea because of lack of time (letter to Kautsky on 16 February 1884). He was writing to Kautsky about it excitedly even though he did not have the book yet:⁴

There is a definitive book—as definitive as Darwin’s was in the case of biology—on the primitive state of society [...] Morgan enables us to present entirely new aspects by providing us, in the shape of prehistory, with a factual basis we have hitherto lacked. (Marx and Engels 2010f, 103)

A few years later, in 1888, enthusiastic with Morgan’s discovery of the gens, he would add a footnote to the opening sentence of *Communist Manifesto*: “The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles.” Here Engels wrote, “That is, all written history.”⁵ He mentioned several contemporary works on ethnology, including *Ancient Society*:

[...] the inner organisation of this primitive communistic society was laid bare, in its typical form, by Lewis Henry Morgan’s (1818–1861) crowning discovery of the true nature of the gens and its relation to the tribe. With the dissolution of the primeval communities, society begins to be differentiated into separate and finally antagonistic classes. I have attempted to retrace this dissolution in *The Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State*. (Marx and Engels 2010c, 482)

In a word, Engels was so impressed by Marx’s notes—and by Morgan’s work—that he consequently decided to carry out the “project” of Marx by himself as the fulfilment of Marx’s will, as he wrote in the Preface to the first edition of *The Origin*: “The following chapters are, in a sense, the fulfilment of a behest” (Engels 2010a, 131).

Engels, then, planned to examine Morgan’s book from a historical materialist perspective, just as Marx might have once thought of doing. However, he had not read the book by that time and could not find a copy of it either; he had only Marx’s excerpts. These notes became the first and

4. Engels wrote in the Preface to fourth edition of *The Origin* in 1891, Morgan rediscovery of mother-right gens has “the same significance for the history of primitive society as Darwin’s theory of evolution has for biology, and Marx’s theory of surplus value for political economy” (Engels 2010b, 212). These words echo Engels’ comments on Morgan in his letter to Kautsky; but they also equate Morgan’s contribution to anthropology not only with Darwin’s contribution to biology but also with Marx’s contribution to political economy.

5. This addition of Engels has been severely criticized by some writers. According to Krader, for instance, Engels’s note withdraws the attention from the opening declaration and, by implication, from the entire *Manifesto* as a manifesto, as a declaration of class war, as an act of the Communist Party toward its end (Krader 1973a, 231). According to Dunayevskaya (1991, 196), Engels thereby modified the dialectical structure of Marx’s historic call to revolution.

sole source material of his work until he got a copy of Morgan's book. Eventually, setting his "responsibility" of editing and publishing the two volumes (II, III) of *Capital* aside, Engels started to work intensively on these notebooks by the end of February 1884. He prepared a synopsis of a book of his own, which at first bore the title *Entstehung der Familien* (*The Formation of the Family*) in March. He was so immersed in the work that he could not help but read his synopsis to Bernstein, who visited him at the end of February-beginning of March 1884:

When I had arrived in London, he [Engels] read to me, night after night, until the small hours in the morning, passage from Marx's manuscripts, and the synopsis of a book with which he connected Marx's excerpts from the American writer Lewis Morgan's *Ancient Society*. (Bernstein 1921, 168)

At last, as he wrote in his letter to Kautsky on March 24, he found a second-hand copy of *The Ancient Society* at the end of March. Having Marx's notes, his own synopsis, and Morgan's book as well as a background of wide erudition, Engels began writing his book in March 1884, exactly one year after Marx's death, and completed his "pamphlet" within two months, at the end of May, as he wrote to Laura Lafargue on the 26th. A few days later, in a letter to August Bebel (6 June 1884), he mentioned that his book "on the origin of the family, property, and the state" is about to appear—it would be published in October 1884 (Marx and Engels 2010f, 151).⁶

Several years later, in another letter to Laura Lafargue on 13 June 1891, he admitted that he had not read the whole literature on the subject while he was writing his book. He would have to do this during the research for the fourth edition:

I had to read the whole literature on the subject (which *entre nous* I had not done when I wrote the book with a cheek worthy of my younger days) and to my great astonishment I find that I had guessed the contents of all these unread books pretty correctly—a good deal better luck than I had deserved. (Marx and Engels 2010g, 202)

The Collaboration of Marx and Engels

Marx and Engels had dealt with societies from a historical materialist perspective with anthropological implications since their first collaborative work, *The Holy Family*, which they had written after they first met in Paris at the end of August 1844. In this work, each of them wrote a separate

6. For the other letters mentioned in this paragraph, see this volume.

part, but they both stressed that people make their history themselves. They developed this idea further in *The German Ideology*. In this co-written but unpublished work, they looked at societies from a broader perspective, both historically and theoretically.⁷ Lise Vogel (2013, 78) points out that *The German Ideology* marks a turning point in the development of Marx and Engels's work. It also contains their first comprehensive formulation of a theory and history of the family. They posited the idea of different forms of property in human history—tribal, old communal and state, and feudal—, each corresponding to a specific stage of development in the division of labor (Marx and Engels 2010b, 32), and they studied development of the private property.

Primitive communal forms and the transition to private property, core issues of *The Origin*, were frequently recurring topics in their works. They wanted to understand the transition to class societies and draw lessons from primitive communal societies for communism in the future. In an 1868 (25 March) letter from Marx to Engels, we find the germ of this perspective of both *The Ethnological Notebooks* and *The Origin*. While mentioning his latest readings on primitive ages and the later developments, Marx points to the newest within the oldest—to the germ of a socialist tendency in primitive communal societies. He emphasizes that it is necessary to look at primitive societies—“this corresponds to the socialist tendency,” “though these learned men [Maurer and Grimm]⁸ have no idea they [the primitive societies] are connected with it [the socialist tendency]. And they are then surprised to find *what is newest in what is oldest*” (Marx and Engels 2010d, 557–559). After a decade, Morgan would provide what Marx criticized in Maurer and Grimm: [In a higher plane of society] it will be a revival, in a higher form, of the liberty, equality, and fraternity of the ancient gentes [communal forms]. Marx cited Morgan's words and was

7. Actually, Marxist researchers generally think that Marx and Engels developed “historical materialism” in this work. Ryazanov, for example, described it in his Introduction to the “I. Feuerbach” section of *The German Ideology* as “the earliest account of the materialistic conception of history” (Carver and Blank 2014, 19). According to editors of Marx and Engels' *Collected Works*, “it was in *The German Ideology* that the materialist conception of history, historical materialism, was first formulated as an integral theory” (Cohen et. al. 2010a, xiii). To August Cornu, it marks the break point for the “formation of historical materialism” by Marx and Engels (Krader 1973a, 240). However, Krader (ibid.) claims, according to Marx, the materialist factor, or the material relations, were already set forth by him in 1843–44, in the critical revision of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*.

8. Georg Ludwig von Maurer was a historian, writing on the constitution of the German Mark; Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm was a philologist, author of a historical grammar of the German language and of folklore adaptations.

indeed entranced by his claim that ancient gens such as the Iroquois contained the communal nucleus to be reproduced at a higher form of the future society. Marx took Morgan's work on the matrilineal clan as confirmation that an early form of communism (Knight 2018, 68). As for Engels, he, too, quoted these words by Morgan in the conclusion of his *The Origin*.

Moreover, we see some essential arguments related to the transition to private property, similar to those in *The Origin* in their correspondence. In a letter to Marx, just a few months before his death (8 December 1882), Engels compared Tacitus' Germans and the American "Redskins" in terms of their modes of social organizations. He pointed out that, although the modes of production of these two societies were much different—the American Indians had only fishermen and hunters, while the Germans had migratory stockbreeding with crop farming—they both showed that "the method of production is less crucial than is the degree to which old blood ties and the ancient mutual community of the sexes within the tribe are being dissolved" (Marx and Engels 2010e, 394–395).⁹ In this letter, we come across the initial form of one of Engels' ideas introduced in *The Origin*: at earlier stages of the development of labor and the more limited amount of its products, the social order appears to be dominated by ties of kinship (Engels 2010a, 132).

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In *The Origin*, Engels used the transition to private property to explain the emergence of the monogamous patriarchal family—male domination—, which I will investigate a bit more in detail in the last chapter. However, two points are worth mentioning here. First, one of the central topics of *The Origin*, the oppression of women, the so-called "querelle des femmes" at that time, was another problem they dealt with in their early writings.

9. Engels explained he had made excerpts from the first volume of "your [Marx's] Bancroft" and added that Tlingits (a group of Indian tribes inhabiting south-eastern Alaska) seemed the counterpart of the Germans – "probably even to a greater extent than your Iroquois". This letter also points out two other things about their collaboration in ethnological studies: First, it was Marx who had introduced Hubert H. Bancroft to Engels. In 1882, Marx had asked Engels to make excerpts from his book. Second, since Engels is familiar with "his" Iroquois people, Marx probably had mentioned them earlier. However, we do not know whether they discussed about them or not. Still, what is important is that Engels had drawn on the discussions with Marx in their correspondence in developing his own theory.

They had mentioned many times the temporality of family and the subordinate position of women in it.¹⁰ In *The German Ideology*, for example, they took the family as a product of the social division of labor and placed the origin of the latter in the “natural” division of labor in the family. They saw in the family the germ of all inequalities as well as the germ of private property:

[...] the distribution, and indeed the unequal distribution, both quantitative and qualitative, of labour and its products, hence property, the nucleus, the first form of which lies in the family, where wife and children are the slaves of the husband. This latent slavery in the family, though still very crude, is the first form of property, but even at this stage it corresponds perfectly to the definition of modern economists, who call it the power of disposing of the labor-power of others. (Marx and Engels 2010b, 46)

Referring to *The German Ideology*, Engels wrote in *The Origin*, “In an old unpublished manuscript, the work of Marx and myself in 1846, I find the following: ‘The first division of labor is that between man and woman for child breeding’”; then continued:

And today, I can add: The first class antithesis which appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamian marriage, and the first class oppression with that of the female sex by the male. (Engels 2010a, 173)

Second, we find in his letter to Marx (8 December 1882) one of his basic arguments in *The Origin*, which provides a ground for the claim of the world-historic defeat of women: Women’s social status is determined by their contribution to social production.¹¹ In the letter, referring to the

10. Marx and Engels discussed both the social inferior status of women and the oppressive character of marital relations in ancient and primitive societies also in their correspondence. For example, in a letter to Engels (11 May 1870), Marx cited his notes gathered from several works related to gender issues in Celts, including the weakness of the marriage bond, voting rights for women as well as “precepts on ascertaining virginity” (Marx and Engels 2010d, 515). These issues of the virginity/chastity of women seem to have preoccupied both of them quite a bit. A few months later, on 6 July 1870, Engels similarly made quotations about the provisions of the old Welsh laws (Ancient Laws and Institutes of Wales, volumes I-II) concerning the virginity of the bride (ibid., 531). He mentioned the subject several times in *The Origin* too. For instance, he compared Germans with Celts and pointed out that strict chastity was required of the girls in the whole community (Engels 2010a, 240).

11. The very same letter contains also the earlier presentation of another emphasis, *jus primae noctis*, in *The Origin* claiming that “In the case of [...] an official person -the chief of the tribe or of the gens, the cacique, shaman, priest, prince or whatever his title- [...] exercises the right of the first night with the bride. [...] this *jus primae noctis* persists to this day as a relic of group marriage among most of the natives of the Alaska territory”. According to Engels,

Tlingits, he wrote, “Another puzzle which is solved here is how placing the main burden of work on women is perfectly compatible with great respect for those women” (Marx and Engels 2010e, 395). In *The Origin*, Engels posited a similar argument in the discussion on the transition to private property. He argued that, under the conditions of communal property, women’s household work had equal social significance with men’s production outside:

In the old communistic household, which embraced numerous couples and their children, the administration of the household, entrusted to the women, was just as much a public, a socially necessary industry as the procurement of food by the men. (Engels 2010a, 181)

However, with the overthrow of the mother-right by private property, exclusive supremacy of men was established, and women were excluded from social production: Women became the slave of men’s lust¹²—that is the world—historic defeat of the female sex:

This situation changed with the patriarchal family, and even more with the monogamian individual family. The administration of the household lost its public character. It was no longer the concern of society. It became a private service. The wife became the first domestic servant, pushed out of participation in social production. (Engels 2010a, 181)

According to Engels, the emancipation of women is impossible as long as women are excluded from social production and remain restricted to private domestic duties (ibid., 262). Following Marx, he wrote that the emancipation of women would only be possible when they could take part

despite the widespread transition from group marriage to pairing, the latter is compatible with only women; men, “they have never—not even to the present day—dreamed of renouncing the pleasures of actual group marriage” as the *jus prime noctis* shows. He continues: “Only after the transition to pairing marriage had been effected by the women could the men introduce strict monogamy -for the women only, of course” (Engels 2010a, 161–162). We read in the letter (Engels to Marx on 8 December 1882) a very similar interpretation: “I have found confirmation of my assumption that the *jus prime noctis* originally found in Europe among the Celts and Slavs, is a survival of the ancient sexual community” (Marx and Engels 2010e, 395).

12. According to Peter Aaby (1977, 36), the “new” male/female relationship Engels describes is more than just political subordination, economic exploitation, or inferior social status; it is the “reification” of women. Claiming to stand Engels on his head, he argues that the reification of women cannot be explained by private property and the state, but on the contrary, is a necessary condition for the emergence of these social phenomena.

in production on a large scale. Marx writes in *Capital* that insofar as machinery dispenses with muscular power, it becomes possible for women—and children—to be drawn to wage work (Marx 2010a, 398). Engels wrote:

The emancipation of women becomes possible only when women are enabled to take part in production on a large, social scale [...] And this has become possible only as a result of modern large-scale industry, which not only permits of the participation of women in production in large numbers, but actually calls for it. (Engels 2010b, 262)

This is one of Engels' (and Marx's) most controversial views and challenged by findings of women's contribution to subsistence production in pre-capitalist and non-capitalist societies. They reveal that since hunter-gatherers, women had taken part in production processes in several ways. First, in primitive societies, the distinction Engels made between a public sphere—men's work—and a private sphere—women's household service—did not exist (Leacock 1974; see also Luxton 2006, 25).¹³ Furthermore, several scholars such as Eleanor Leacock (1978, 27), Peter Aaby (1977), Carolyn Fluehr-Lobban (1979), and Moira Maconachie (2009) underline women's contribution to food provision in primitive societies. D. N. and G. K. (1989) give several examples of primitive societies, in which women take part in hunting. Leacock (1978, 252) points out women make an essential economic contribution in every society, but, according to her, their status depends on whether they control the conditions of their work and the distribution of the goods they produce. Again, many researchers such as Joan W. Scott (2005, 378) shows that women have worked as domestic workers, as farm laborers, and as apprentices and clerks, long before the factory work. Another problem in Engels' claim is that it has been impossible to explain the breadth and depth of the sexual division of labor by reference to different physical capabilities, for it is well known that women's work historically has been as laborious as that of men (see Humphries 2009, 26). Regarding this problem, Juliet Mitchell (1990, 47) points out that Engels therefore gives women's physiological weakness as a primary cause of women's oppression. As a result, it escaped Engels that women's labor contributes to social production and reproduction and is not limited to the domestic sphere.¹⁴

13. Luxton also criticizes Engels for his analysis ignored issues of race and racism.

14. Another problem of Engels' claim is related to the participation of women in social production in socialist societies. Feminist scholars, referring to women's situation in the ex-socialist countries, point to the continuation of patriarchal relations and the double workload of women (see, e.g. Eisenstein 1979; Hatrmann 1981; Walby 1989).

Further, the initial connection between production and reproduction found in Engels became blurred with the assumption that the transformation of productive structures would automatically erase women's oppression (Beneria and Sen 1981, 294). As Cinzia Arruzza (2013, 87) points out, Engels' optimism over how women's joining the labor force would be the key to their emancipation has been disproved by reality itself.

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As we saw, we find roots of central claims of *The Origin* in the earlier works and correspondence of Marx and Engels. More importantly, we find in *The German Ideology* the initial form of Engels' new perspective in *The Origin*. Marx and Engels had accepted that people produced themselves by their labor since the dawn of human societies. They had developed this conception in their early writings, such as Marx's *1844 Notebooks* or their *Holy Family*. Engels repeated this thesis but with a different emphasis in the Introduction to *The Origin*:

According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is again of a twofold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, of food, clothing and shelter and the implements required for this; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. (Engels 2010a, 1131–1132)

The first form of Engels' methodological stance is present in *The German Ideology*. There, Marx and Engels considered the production and reproduction of human beings, the woman-man relationship, and the family as one of the three essential aspects of social activity. They ascribed to the family a more independent role and placed it alongside production as a determining moment in history. In other words, they suggested analyzing society as a whole, including the relation between man and woman and the production of human beings alongside the production of material life and means of production. In the first section, "Feuerbach", they wrote:

The third circumstance, which, from the very outset, enters into historical development, is that men, who daily re-create their own life, begin to make other men, to propagate their kind: the relation between man and woman, parents and children, the family. (Marx and Engels 2010b, 42–43)

Some Marxist researchers claim that the first section of that chapter belongs to Marx. Ryazanov, for example, in his introduction to the "on Feuerbach", assigned the first section, entitled "Ideology in General,

German Ideology in Particular”, to Marx (Krader 1973a, 236) and claimed that the rest of the chapter was written solely by Engels (Carver and Blank 2014, 21). Krader, however, pointed out that Marx’s characteristic phrasing is not confined to the first section but rather is evident in the rest of the chapter as well (Krader 1973a, 236). He suggested considering the entire chapter as basically the work of Marx. If one follows Krader, she has to admit the above quotation comes from Marx. That is, it was Marx alone who had considered the production of human beings as one of the essential three aspects. What Engels developed in *The Origin* was actually just the resurrection of Marx’s earlier conception. However, if one stands on Ryazanov’s side, Engels must have written this section alone. We are not sure whether it was only Marx, or Engels, or both who developed this perspective. Nevertheless, it is a product of their collaboration, and they both had approved the text—at least none of them crossed out this part.

In *The Origin*, Engels turned to this conception and went a step further by merging the first two aspects of social activity they posed in *The German Ideology* into one. Now we have “the production of the means of existence [...] and of the tools necessary for that production” on the one hand and “the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species” on the other—production and reproduction. He explained what is meant by the “production and reproduction of the immediate life”.

Engels offers a theoretical and methodological guideline for the investigation of the origins of women’s oppression by establishing a relation between the spheres of production and the reproduction. This methodological approach provided socialist feminists a ground to develop social reproduction theory.¹⁵ Thereby, patriarchal domination was distinguished from capitalist domination (Burris 1982, 60).¹⁶ Yet, some scholars, for example, Vogel (2013), Martha Gimenez (2009), and Paul Blackledge (2018) criticize Engels since his conception legitimizes the dual-system theories. Rather, they support the idea that there is only one system, relations of production, which also determines reproduction. On the contrary, socialist feminists praise what they lament but criticize him for not giving sufficient weight to reproduction. Frigga Haug (2015, 48), for example, appreciates

15. Social reproduction involves fundamental social processes and institutions through which people and society are reproduced. It has three dimensions: (a) Biological reproduction of the species, (b) Reproduction of the labor force, and (c) Reproduction of provisioning and caring needs.

16. That is, while laborers related to production are under capitalist exploitation, (female) laborers related to reproduction would essentially be under male domination.

Engels for he named both spheres as “production” and thereby established the starting point for a theory of gender relations. Jane Humphries (2009) praises Engels for his view that activities related to reproduction are analytically equivalent to those related to production, but criticizes him for subsuming reproduction under production. Heidi Hartmann (1981), in her classical critique of Engels, argues against the claim that reproduction is dependent on production and the contradiction between men and women has to be subsumed under the class struggle. She suggests explaining the sources and dynamics of the oppression of women by the interaction between capitalism and patriarchy (ibid.).

Although his methodological contribution opens new horizons, Engels' approach still suffers from various shortcomings. One of the most important problems is that his conception of reproduction is connected only to biological procreation. Maconachie (2009) points out the “naturalistic” approach of Engels toward the sexual division of labor between men and women. Susan Himmelweit and Simon Mohun (1977, 17–18), Vogel (2013), Humphries (2009, 13), and Haug (1998, 109) criticize Engels by claiming that he examined only procreation and not the domestic labor for the reproduction of society. Besides, in the rest of his book, he ignored the role of reproduction and the family and subsumed them under the mode of production, as Humphries mentioned above (Maconaiche 2009; Humphries 2009; Haug 2015, 48; Eisentein 1990, 123; Burris 1982, 60; Himmelweit and Mohun 1977; 17–18). Richard Weikart (1994, 663) rightly finds Engels' attitude in accord entirely with the earlier view in *The German Ideology*, where the family dropped out of consideration after having been ascribed a role. Humphries (2009, 11) points out that, in this way, feminist issues become secondary, and the contradiction between men and women is subsumed to that between capital and labor.

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We see that the source material of *The Origin* was Marx's notebook on Morgan. Moreover, Engels' life-long cooperation with Marx also contributed to his work. We find in their joint works and correspondence similar debates on and initial forms of his arguments in *The Origin* on both the transition from communal to private property and its effects on women. Further, we see his view to ascribe to the family a more independent role and to place it as a determining moment in history has its origin in *The German Ideology*. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that *The Origin's* roots go back to Marx.

THE ETHNOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS OF KARL MARX

Although the genesis of *The Origin* is closely related to the *Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*, it differs from the latter in many aspects, especially on the topics of transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, that is, the so-called world-historic defeat of the female sex. To see these differences, we need to take a closer look at *Ethnological Notebooks*.

In the *Ethnological Notebooks*, Marx revitalized his early thoughts, including those on the women question. He also developed new ideas and new perspectives, which remain relevant for our age.

Marx's engagement with anthropology continued in various ways throughout his life. One of the main subjects in his early studies was philosophical anthropology, as can be seen in his dissertation, in his writings, in his correspondence, and his polemics against Hegel, Feuerbach, and Proudhon. However, his interest in anthropology emerged most prominently in his last years, when he began to work intensively on empirical anthropology, from the works of the modern anthropology quartet, Lewis Henry Morgan, Sir Henry Sumner Maine, Sir John Budd Phear, and John Lubbock (Lord Avebury). Marx also studied several other works in ethnology; for example, in 1879, he excerpted the book *Communal Landownership: The Causes, Course, and Consequences of its Dissolution* by Maxim M. Kovalevsky. Thomas C. Patterson (2009, 3) points out that Marx was an anthropologist by nineteenth-century standards if not by modern ones.

However, his notebooks were left to the "gnawing criticism of mice" for a long time and did not attract anyone's attention, other than Engels and a few scholars. Nearly forty years later, at the beginning of the 1920s, David Ryazanov, the editor of the historical edition of the collected works of Marx and Engels, rediscovered Marx's ethnological notebooks. Although committed to publishing the whole opus of Marx and Engels, Ryazanov rejected the idea of publishing one type of text of Marx, his excerpt notebooks, such as the ethnological notebooks. He characterized them, with other late unpublished works of Marx, as "inexcusable pedantry."¹⁷

17. Still, he gave a lecture of a brief account of them entitled as "Latest Report on Unpublished Works by Marx and Engels" at the Socialist Academy in Moscow in 1923. After that, he published his speech in the *Vestnik Sotsialisticheskoy Akademii*, in the same year. In his speech he told, "Sometimes, in reconsidering these Notebooks, the question arises: Why did he waste so much time on this systematic, fundamental summary, or expend so much labor as he spent as late as the year 1881, on one basic book on geology, summarizing it chapter by chapter. In the 63rd year of his life—that is inexcusable pedantry. Here is another example: he received, in 1878, a copy of Morgan's work [...] makes a detailed summary

After eighty-nine years from Marx's death, in 1972, Krader transcribed and published his notes under the title *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx*. However, the *Ethnological Notebooks* contain only about half of Marx's 1879–82 notes on non-Western and pre-capitalist societies.¹⁸

Marx's work is incomplete and sketchy. It is very difficult, as D. Norman Smith (2002, 74) writes, to navigate the labyrinth of Marx's text, which consists of German, English, Greek, Latin, French, Gaelic, Hindi, and other languages. According to Franklin Rosemont (1989), the book presents the reader with all the difficulties of James Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* and even more. Christine Ward Gailey (2003, 52) argues that reading the Notebooks makes one feel like the street cop in *Blade Runner*¹⁹ who was grappling with "City-speak."

As many scholars such as Rosemont point out, it is very far from being a rough draft, as well. It is a kind of "raw substance of work" (Rosemont 1989). In these notebooks, Marx both developed new ideas and revitalized his early thoughts, including those on the so-called women question—the oppression of women.



The Ethnological Notebooks opened up entirely new perspectives. In these notebooks, Marx went over many themes he formulated in philosophical anthropology in the 1840s. In the notebooks, Marx paid special attention to the origin of both the classes and the family and patriarchy. While this has continuity with his past thoughts, it also contains new openings. Marx thought that communist concepts were embodied in these ethnological studies, particularly in Morgan's work on the Iroquois society; more importantly, he found the germ of future communist societies in these primitive communities. In other words, Marx not only looked at the past but developed a broad perspective that sheds light on the present and the future.

However, these notebooks did not attract the attention of many scholars; yet some, for example, Raya Dunayevskaya (1991, xxi), welcomes the

of Morgan" (Dunayevskaya 1991, 177–178). In 1941, the notebook on Morgan alone was published in the Arkhiv of the Marx-Engels based on photocopies of the original made by Ryazanov (For the details, see Krader 1974, 1; Anderson 1998, 2; Carver and Blank 2014, 15).

18. An all-English edition would be published soon. (For the details, see Anderson 2002 and Smith 2002.)

19. 1982 science fiction film adapted by Ridley Scott from *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* by Philip K. Dick.

book as a historical happening which creates “a new vantage point from which to view Marx’s oeuvres as a totality” (ibid., 195). Kevin Anderson praised the book as a new window into Marx’s thought (Anderson 1998).

These notebooks suggest that Marx is on the eve of a new and grander project. For some, these notebooks are the drafts of such a study. Krader (1973a, 312), for example, thinks that the outlines of such work were depicted in the *Grundrisse*, a plan for the composition of *Capital*. Rosemont (1989), too, compares them with the *Grundrisse* and considers, as Marx had said of the latter, *Ethnological Notebooks* to contain some “nice developments.” He also thinks that Marx was, just as in the *Grundrisse*, in conversation with himself (ibid.). Similarly, Ward Gailey (2003, 47) compares them with the *Grundrisse* and other earlier works, however, in another respect. She finds continuity in them in terms of their concern of the relationship of communities to the state in various pre-capitalist contexts. Donald Kelley (1984, 256) compares the notebooks with Marx’s *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*: “just as he had prepared the ground for his theory of capital by the critical notes in his *Manuscripts*, so now Marx began his new project through notes on the early and primitive societies.” Kelley concludes that Marx was in a transition process from *Capital* to “a possibly even grander project” on a larger province of the human sciences: “Marx continued to look beyond the fictions of economic analysis. Implicit in his last notes [...] was the aspiration of opening the door to larger categories, especially those of tribe, kinship, and sexuality [...]” (Kelley 1984, 256).

In his last years, Marx really seemed planning a new grand project, setting aside all his other studies, especially the second and third volumes of *Capital*, and immersed himself in ethnology readings. This opens a new way of analyzing societies from a broad perspective by considering family and gender. This offers an opportunity to analyze also both the present bourgeois and the future societies. The question is, as Ward Gailey (2003, 47) asks, why Marx turned to the earlier forms of societies when his explicit aim in undertaking the study of capitalism was its dismantling? Moreover, what does his ethnological investigation mean in terms of his revolutionary perspective? Does that mean, for example, as some researchers claim, Marx abandoned his *Capital* project? According to Kelley (1984, 256), for instance, “caught up in this interest [...] Marx could not finish his *Capital*.” Ryazanov thinks similarly; however, he complains about what Kelley praises. Ryazanov’s criticism that “the old Marx” wasted so much time on this systematic, fundamental summary while he should have finished *Capital* is the other side of the same coin. Actually, both Kelley and

Ryazanov claim the same thing: that Marx completely broke with the *Capital* “project.” Against this, Smith (2002, 79) links Marx’s interest in ethnology to the ongoing project of *Capital*, arguing that Marx’s ethnology offers insights into globalizing capitalism and the dialectic of clan and class societies: “Marx began to explore the ‘extended reproduction’ of capitalism on a world scale”; therefore, he “needed [...] to know as much as possible about non-capitalist social structures [...] That is what the ‘ethnological notebooks’ represent.” Patterson (2009, 91–92) agrees with Smith and thinks that Marx’s turn to anthropology and history was not distinct from his concern with capitalism but rather was an integral part of that project. Similarly, Anderson (2002, 90) asserts that Marx’s interest was organic to his wish to understand the periphery of an expanding global capitalist system.

Both approaches fail to provide the total conception of Marx fully. It was, actually, not a break with the *Capital* “project” as Kelley claims; on the contrary, the problems dealt with in *Capital* continued in the period of his more systematic ethnological researches in 1879–1882. However, Marx’s interest in ethnology in his last years was not limited to, as Smith suggests, seeing “extended reproduction of capitalism on a world scale” either. Rather, the problem was related to, as Dunayevskaya (1991, 190) highlights, “how total must be the uprooting of existing society,” a new type of revolution. From a similar perspective, according to Bellamy Foster and his colleagues, Marx set *Capital* aside due to his interest and direct identification with indigenous revolts (Foster, Clark and Holleman 2020, 9). As a result, the problem was, seeking a new type of human relations, a new type of society. This vision of a new type of— an egalitarian, classless, free— society is connected to, as Stanley Diamond (1975, 3) points out, Marx’s lifelong purpose of concretizing the human possibilities he developed in his early writings. It is connected to realizing the human potentials fully, which was most clearly posed in what we know as the *Grundrisse, the Economic Manuscripts of 1857–1858*. Here in the *Grundrisse*, he redefined true wealth as the universality of individual’s needs, capacities, enjoyments, productive forces, as the absolute unfolding of woman’s creative abilities and potentials, as the development of all human powers as such the end in itself, as reproducing oneself in her totality and as the seeking in the absolute movement of becoming (Marx 2010b, 411–12).

Therefore, Marx approached anthropology from a historical materialist perspective and called upon the human past to develop a project for the future with revolutionary consequences. Marx’s vision was a new form of

society; therefore, he did not stop at any historical stage as if it were an ultimate one but insisted on the continuity of struggle and revolution. Diamond (1975, 3) concludes, he began with a vision and ended, just before his death, with the ethnological notebooks. However, that was not an “end”; rather, that was what Ward Gailey called “dialectical return” (Gailey 2003, 52–53), which we can see throughout Marx’s works that provides us with a clue to one of the purposes of the anthropological explorations in the Notebooks. That is what Marx found in Morgan several years after he had criticized Maurer and Grimm; that is the problem of “what is newest in what is oldest.” In short, ethnological studies in his last years enabled him to continue the vision he embraced in his early writings in a new way, from a different view, and with new revolutionary implications.

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With this revolutionist perspective, in his ethnological studies, Marx turned back to his earlier ideas, especially to the oppression of women. Many scholars mention that the early thoughts of Marx were present in his very last work. E. P. Thompson (1981, 163), for example, writes “Marx, in his increasing preoccupation in his last years with anthropology, was resuming the projects of his Paris youth.” For Dunayevskaya (1991, 190), with his study on primitive societies, Marx was diving into the study of human development, in the most basic Man/Woman relationship that he had worked out in his *1844 Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*. Rosemont (1989) also thinks that the relation between man and woman, a topic of Marx’s *1844 Manuscripts*, is one of the recurring themes of his ethnological inquiries. Maximillian Rubel (2005, 354) claims that Marx returned to some of Fourier’s intuitions that he had incorporated in his first book, *The Holy Family*, written some thirty years earlier. But some writers object to these views. Anderson (2002, 90), for example, underlines that, in these writings, one of the core theoretical issues was family and gender relations across a wide variety of societies; however, he thinks they did not arise, except briefly, during any other period of Marx’s work. For Paresh Chattopadhyay (1999, 68), on the contrary, this was not a return to the women’s issue but the maintenance of the “feminist” position which Marx had already had.

In his ethnological research, Marx returned to his earlier theme of the “women question.” He traced the roots of family and oppression of women. Moreover, Morgan’s studies on gentile societies made him concretize his early consideration of communal societies. He now worked out his

earlier vision of the emancipation of women he had taken up in his early writings in a new way. The egalitarian relations were one of the characteristics of gentile societies that most interested Marx. Indeed, he was struck by the freedom women enjoyed in gentile organizations such as the Iroquois, where the degree of social involvement of women was far beyond that of any civilized society. Therefore, he cited several passages from Morgan on women. For instance, he quoted a letter sent to Morgan by a missionary among the Seneca:

The women were the great power among the clans, as everywhere else. They did not hesitate, when occasion required, 'to knock off the horns', as it was technically called, from the head of a chief, and send him back to the ranks of the warriors. (Marx 1974, 116)

Marx's readings in ethnology also led him to dig into the roots of oppression of women and the development of—patriarchal—family across history. For example, his notes on Lange contain varying forms of the marital power of the Roman *paterfamilias* across class, ethnic lines, and history (see Anderson 2002, 92). In these notebooks, he turned one more time to Fourier and wrote that “the modern family contains in germ not only slavery, but also serfdom [...] It contains in miniature all the antagonisms which later develop widely in society and its state” (Marx 1974, 120). Further, he evaluated the transformations taking place in the institutions of society with their impact on women. For example, Marx pointed out that as Roman civilization developed, marriage was included within the scope of secular rather than traditional law. This resulted in the weakening of *paterfamilias* and the empowerment of women (see Anderson 2002, 94).

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN *THE ETHNOLOGICAL NOTEBOOKS* AND *THE ORIGIN*

Although one of the source materials of *The Origin* is the ethnological notebooks of Marx, and although Engels and Marx agreed on many issues, *The Origin* differs from Marx's manuscripts in many respects; actually, it reflects Morgan's book far more than it reflects Marx's notes (Rosemont 1989). The reason is that Engels made use of, but a small part of, Marx's excerpts in *The Origin*. However, this is not a question of quantity but methodology. There are significant divergences in vision (Kelley 1984, 260).

One of the main topics of Engels in *The Origin* was the transition from the matriarchal family to the patriarchal one through private property—the world—historic defeat of the female sex. According to Engels:

The overthrow of mother right was the world-historic defeat of the female sex. The man seized the reins in the house too, the woman was degraded, enthralled, became the slave of the man's lust, a mere instrument for breeding children. (Engels 2010a, 165)

However, Marx seemed not interested in this transition as Engels did.

The origin of patriarchy was indeed one of the prominent controversial issues in nineteenth-century anthropology (see Fluehr-Lobban 1979; Krader 1974; Levine 1973; Maconachie 2009). Bachofen, in his *Das Mutterrecht* (1861), developed the concept of the matriarchate and proposed the idea of the historical priority of maternal kinship and matriarchal social order over paternal kinship and patriarchal order. Independently J. F. McLennan described archaic endogamous groups forming around "primitive mothers." Lubbock based *The Origin of Civilization* on the matriarchy thesis. Sir Henry Maine (1861), on the contrary, described the early human society as male-dominated. In the *Ancient Society*, Morgan, criticizing Maine's idea, pictured the gentile organization of society, based on mother-right, as preceding the monogamous organization of society, based on father right. Engels, following Bachofen and Morgan, asserted that matriarchy (and descent in the female line) was a general phase of human history, which was overthrown and replaced by patriarchy (and descent in the male line). He had additional assumptions that women did not participate in direct production in primitive societies, and their domestic work had equal social significance with men's work outside. He assumes that supremacy of women characterised primitive societies, but he argues that it rested on the material foundation of a natural sex-division of labour within the primitive communistic household (Vogel 2013). According to Engels, with the transition to livestock and agricultural production, men now began to gain control over the surplus product—possession of the herds—and gained the dominant position in the family. Women's domestic work lost its public character, and the wife became the domestic servant of men. Men wanted to pass on their inheritance to their sons. But under the conditions where the descent was reckoned according to the mother, it was not possible. Two major changes were required: on the one hand, tracing the lineage through the father—overthrow of matrilineality—, and on the other hand, transferring men's inheritance to only their sons—the overthrow of matriarchal law of inheritance—. That means matriarchy had to be overthrown. Consequently, a form of marriage, patriarchal monogamy, which ensures the male line of descent and the paternal law of inheritance, was invented.

As many scholars show, Engels failed to support his claim of the “world-historic defeat of women” due to private property. His assumptions failed, too. His arguments of the concentration of private property in the hands of men and men’s desire to pass their wealth to their sons, in particular, remain unexplained. Humphries (2009, 12), for instance, points out that it is not clear why men controlled the herds when agricultural production was women’s sphere. According to her, if the surplus product was wrested from women’s control, men must already have appropriated power. Josette Trat (1998, 91) highlights that Engels’ argument presupposes relations of domination which he claimed to explain. Maconachie relates Engels’s explanation to his “naturalistic” approach toward the sexual division of labor between men and women (Maconachie 2009). Weikart (1994, 663) posits another essential question: Why would men in a matrilineal system want to bequeath their property to their biological children? Trat (1998, 91) asks similarly, what is this curious “instinct” pushing men to act like that; as Arruzza (2013, 85) asks similarly, “what are the foundations of it?” Weikart (1994, 663) and Stevi Jackson (1999, 21) reveal that this vitiates Engels’ analysis, for he insisted that the transformation to monogamy was social and not natural. Gimenez (2009, 42) thinks Engels’ explanation that men wanted to pass their wealth to their children is idealistic. Materialist analyses, however, examine transformations in human needs and behaviors through social relationships. Treating such social relations as natural thus undermines materialism.

In light of these criticisms, I want to question Engels’ notion of the world—historic defeat of the female sex—the transition from the matriarchal society to a patriarchal one—, comparing *The Origin* with *Ethnological Notebooks*. First, as many researchers in anthropology indicate, findings do not support the matriarchal epoch thesis.²⁰ Matrilineality (that is, the maternal line) cannot be confused with a matriarchal society in which women have a dominant power. There are only some matrilineal societies but not any matriarchal ones. However, there is no contemporary or historical example of a matrilineal social organization in which political power is monopolized by women. It is true that in these matrilineal societies, men exert little authority over their wives; however, women and children are under greater or lesser authority from the women’s kinsmen—brothers or mothers’ brothers—. The position of women did indeed decline with the

20. Fluehr-Lobban (1979) gives details of the anthropological debates (see also Gough 1971, 761 and Leacock 1974).

emergence of class society, but that does not mean that women were executors and rule makers in pre-class societies. Further, many data illustrate that women are not the complete equals of men in most primitive societies lacking private property. There is also some evidence, which shows the gradual emergence of male domination within primitive communal societies. Trat (1998, 92) mentions feminist views, which extend oppression over women to the gradual emergence of a kind of property held by the kin groups within communal societies. Karen Sacks (1983, 397)²¹ and Trat (1998, 91) also point out that male domination can be found in pre-class societies, which do not know of private property. The concentration of private property in the hands of men actually proves that men previously had power and privileges, as Humphries and Trat suggest above. Aaby (1977, 27) concludes that if we follow Engels's logic, the female sex should never have been defeated because women were the direct producers of agriculture. Similarly, when we reject his arguments that women did not participate in direct production in primitive societies and animals were domesticated before agriculture, the ground of the world-historic defeat of female sex collapses. It means the private property does not seem to be the basis for male supremacy, though the position of women declined with the emergence of class society.²²

Aside from these problems, Engels' notion of the "world-historic defeat of the female sex" creates one of the deepest divergences between *The Origin* and the *Ethnological Notebooks*. One reason for this is that there are differences between Marx and Engels in their approach to Bachofen's and Morgan's works on the issue of the historical priority of the mother-right. First, it was not really Marx's statement; it originated in Bachofen. Concerning Morgan, although both were greatly influenced by his book, their approaches differ. According to Engels, Morgan independently discovered the materialist interpretation of history; however, Marx was less impressed

21. Just like Engels did by comparing American Indians with Germans in a letter to Marx (see the first chapter), Sacks, starting from a distinction between public and domestic labor and women's role as adult and wife, compared the position of women in four different societies: a hunter-gatherer society (Mbuti), two non-state agricultural societies (Loved, Pondo), and a state society (Ganda). She concludes that women are not necessarily either social adults or dependent wives; they may be both since their position in each sphere is determined by different factors. However, her analysis does not explain the relation of women's social status with their labor (Sacks 1983 386–87).

22. Still, despite their criticisms, some scholars agree with Engels' claim that gender oppression emerged with private property and classes (see, e.g., Leacock 1974 and Gimenez 2009, 41).

with Morgan's conclusions and did not share Engels' view that *Ancient Society* is an epoch-making work (see Krader 1973a, 250 and Fluehr-Lobban 1979, 343). Moreover, while Engels took from Bachofen the idea of matriarchy and thought it was approved by Morgan's researches, Marx did not adequately support this argument in his notes. Moreover, as Fluehr-Lobban insists, in none of Marx's writings on primitive communist societies is there any suggestion that he accepted the historical priority of matriarchy (Fluehr-Lobban 1979, 344).

Further, in explaining the origin of the oppression of women, Engels made the topic of property of herds a central one; however, Marx did not put a special emphasis on that. Rather, for Marx, the establishment of patriarchy was based on the same dynamics that also lead to private property. Marx's approach to empirical anthropology was underpinned by a historical and dialectical notion of society (Patterson 2009, 93). He considered, like Hegel, human society as a process of becoming and contradictions as the motor of historical movement. He focused on the inner contradictions of gentile societies, not on the struggle between matriarchal and patriarchal forces, as Fluehr-Lobban (1979, 344) shows. Thus, he proceeded from the fact that the principle of gens has its negation in concrete social organization as ranks, casts, and social stratification (Krader 1974, 13–15). Besides, while Engels explained the emergence of the patriarchal family only with subjective factors—men's desire to pass their property to their children—, Marx included objective sides of interest.²³ He focused on the formation of ranks and the relation between the chiefs and the mass. This dialectical approach was quite clear in his comment on Morgan:

The expression by Plutarch, that 'the humble and poor readily followed the summons of Theseus' and the judgment from Aristotle cited by him, that Theseus 'was inclined toward the people', appear, however, despite Morgan, to indicate that *chiefs of the gentes [...] through wealth etc. had already reached a conflict of interest with the common people of the gentes.* (Marx 1974, 210; emphasis added)

In these words, Marx challenged Morgan, pointing out the conflict between the chiefs and the mass. This means the conflict of interests has its roots in communal societies. Moreover, this is not only the conflict between two individuals but between two different social *layers*. That is the objective side of the interest of property Marx pointed out.

23. Krader (1973a) offers a detailed analysis about objective and subjective factors of interest.

Marx extended the roots of inequalities to communal societies, and he discerned the germs of male domination there. The development of gender inequalities was, in fact, according to Marx, accompanied by a substantial process, the birth of social stratifications, the gradual emergence of a propertied and privileged tribal caste within the gentile organization. In brief, he showed that oppression in general and the suppression of women, in particular, arose from within primitive communism, related to the establishment of ranks—the relationship of the chief to the mass (Kraeder 1974; Dunayevskaya 1991). One can see this from the commentaries he added to the excerpts he took. For example, when Morgan mentioned Iroquois women were free to express their wishes and opinions through a representative in the Council of Chiefs, Marx added with emphasis “Decision given by the [all-male] Council.” Marx (1974, 162) showed that even in a gentile organization like the Iroquois, where women enjoyed much greater freedom, men already had some privileges.

Those comments Marx added also reveal the dialectic in his reasoning. Marx did not take facts as they were, as they seem, but evaluated them together with their negation through their dialectical movement. For example, as the quotation above shows, where Morgan spoke of the freedom of the Iroquois women, he pointed out that women’s rights were restricted by men. Likewise, where Morgan stated that the Greeks exhibited a principle of studied selfishness among the males, tending to lessen the appreciation of women, Marx referred to the situation of the goddesses on Olympus as the demonstration of the formerly free and more influential position of women (Marx 1974, 121).

Another but essential problem with the notion of “the world-historic defeat” is that it ignores the struggle of women that has taken various forms throughout history against male domination. On the one hand, this statement does not mention struggles, weapons, and other means of oppression in the emergence of patriarchy. On the other hand, and more importantly, it portrays women as passive, submissive victims rather than active, persistent, history-making subjects. It, therefore, postpones the emancipation of women until an indefinite time.

However, for Marx, in the historical development, human beings are the main subject—men and women acting, self-actualizing, reproducing themselves and the society—. Hence, *The Ethnological Notebooks*, as Ward Gailey (2003, 52) emphasizes, can be seen as a defense of human agency in determining pathways of change. As he did not stop at any historical stage as if it were ultimate, he did not take the rise of patriarchy as an end.

What is essential for Marx was the ongoing struggle for a new form of human relationship, a new form of society, a classless, free society—a society in which all the women and men would realize all their human possibilities. We see this in his emphasis on the emancipation of women in his writings throughout his life. In *The Holy Family*, for example, he quoted Fourier's words that claimed the degree of the emancipation of women is the measure of emancipation of society and explicitly accused men of oppressing women:

The change in a historical epoch can always be determined by women's progress towards freedom, because here, in the relation of woman to man, of the weak to the strong, the victory of human nature over brutality is most evident. The degree of emancipation of woman is the natural measure of general emancipation. [...] No one is punished more severely for keeping woman in slavery than man himself. (Marx and Engels 2010a, 196)

Further, in his letter to Ludwig Kugelman dated 12 December 1868, Marx wrote that everyone who knows anything of history also knows that great social revolutions are impossible without the feminine ferment (Marx and Engels 2010d, 185). After that, he repeated his words in the *Holy Family*, slightly altering them: Social progress may be measured precisely by the social position of the fair sex (plain ones included).

Consequently, Marx called upon the human past to understand the present and develop a vision for the future (Foster, Clark and Holleman 2020, 9). Marx's work included clues about not only the past but also the future. Again, this was far more than a mere move from a philosophic to an empirical anthropological view, rather a revolutionary move.

CONCLUSIONS

Remaining from the founders of Marxism, we have two major works, both of which originated from the same source, from the ethnological readings of the "old" Marx: *The Origin* and the *Ethnological Notebooks*.

The main topics Engels dealt with in *The Origin*, the transition from communal to private property, the impact of this transition on women, oppression of women, and family, were recurring themes in Marx and Engels' earlier works and their correspondence. Engels developed from early insights through Marx's notes and Morgan's work his arguments in *The Origin*, one of which is his famous contention about the world-historic defeat of the female sex. The roots of *The Origin*, therefore, go to Marx.

The overthrow of the matriarchal social order by private property and the establishment of the patriarchal order, the world-historic defeat of the female sex, which is the central topic of *The Origin*, is the most controversial claim of Engels as well. This claim and the assumptions put forward to support it were later challenged by anthropological findings and criticized by feminist scholars. Moreover, this notion creates a substantial divergence between *The Origin* and the *Ethnological Notebooks*. Marx did not support this view in his notebooks. While Engels explained the emergence of the patriarchal family with private property, Marx extended the roots of the patriarchy to communal ownership and focused on the contradictions in primitive societies. Marx tried to grasp the dialectic of the emergence of male domination out of egalitarian relations. When we consider this notion together with Marx's evaluations, a new path opens before us. If the origin of patriarchy cannot be explained by private property, the abolition of private property cannot abolish it. In this case, the abolition of capitalism does not guarantee the emancipation of women. Of course, in today's capitalist world, patriarchy has gained new determinations. Male control and domination over women's labor processes and bodies continue but in different ways. Today we are talking about capitalist patriarchy. However, the roots of today's patriarchy go to the primitive one. So the emancipation of women requires the struggle not only against capitalism but also against patriarchy. Further, while Engels described this transition as a worldwide, historical defeat, Marx did not stop at any historical stage as if it were an ultimate one but insisted on the continuity of struggle and revolution. What was essential for Marx was a new form of society, a society in which all the women and men would realize all their human possibilities, which was, of course, essential to Engels as well. However, Engels did not mention women's struggle for such freedom, for their emancipation.

Following Marx, we can say that wealth, the true freedom, is the absolute unfolding of women's creative abilities and potentials, the development of all her powers, reproducing herself in her totality, and seeking in the absolute movement of becoming. For women to realize their human possibilities, all domination over their bodies and labor must be eliminated. They can have such freedom only by struggling with the capitalist and patriarchal forms of domination. Hence, Marx's discoveries on the origin of patriarchy in communal societies and his insights about the communal societies of the future can provide socialist feminists with a new perspective as they explore the sources of women's oppression and the ways of emancipation.



While Engels derived many of the arguments in *The Origin* from his earlier studies and his joint works with Marx, still, his work is the first to present them openly and systematically. Therefore, it can be seen as perhaps the first major work of Marxism in the post-Marx period.

Despite Engels' differences from Marx and some of his theses being challenged by modern research, *The Origin* is still an important book for socialist feminists. Engels had underlined that the oppression of women is not natural but historical, and going beyond the production relations (economic field) in the narrow sense and combining production with reproduction, developed a perspective analyzing society as a whole. Thereby, he offered a methodological guideline to explain the oppression of women. Consequently, he made a significant contribution to the debate on the origin of the family and the oppression of women.

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