



Sunshine for Women
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The Creation of Patriarchy

Gerda Lerner

Oxford University Press, 1986

Lerner believes that patriarchy can be deconstructed only by reversing the process by which it was constructed. Hence, to abolish patriarchy we must know how and why patriarchy came into being and address those underlying issues. Lerner proposed a theory to explain the development of patriarchy and offers many comments about women in history and women in history as represented by men. In her sequel *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, which discusses the rise of an antipatriarchal feminist attitude among women from the middle ages to 1870, Lerner introduces us to many wonderful, powerful, proto-feminist women.

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Introduction

1) "Thus, the recorded and interpreted record of the past of the human race is only a partial record, in that it omits the past of half of humankind, and it is distorted, in that it tells the story from the viewpoint of the male half of humanity only." page 4

2) "No man has been excluded from the historical record because of his sex, yet all women were." page 5

3) "The contradiction between women's centrality and active role in creating society and their marginality in the meaning-giving process of interpretation and explanation has been a dynamic force, causing women to struggle against their condition. When, in that process of struggle, at certain historic moments, the contradictions in their relationship to society and to historical process are brought into the consciousness of women, they are then correctly perceived and named as deprivations that women share as a group. This coming-into-consciousness of women becomes the dialectical force moving them into action to change their condition and to enter a new relationship to male-dominated society." page 5

4) "I will, in this book, develop the following propositions:

a) The appropriation by men of women's sexual and reproductive capacity occurred prior to the formation of private property and class society. Its commodification lies, in fact, at the foundation of private property. (Chapters One and Two)

b) The archaic states were organized in the form of patriarchy; thus from its inception the state had an essential interest in the maintenance of the patriarchal family. (Chapter Three)

c) Men learned to institute dominance and hierarchy over other people by their earlier practice of dominance over the women of their own group. This found expression in the institutionalization of slavery, which began with the enslavement of women conquered groups. (Chapter Four)

d) Women's sexual subordination was institutionalized in the earliest law codes and enforced by the full power of the state. Women's cooperation in the system was secured by various means: force, economic dependency on the male head of the family, class privileges bestowed upon conforming and dependent women of the upper classes, and the artificially created division of women into respectable and not-respectable women. (Chapter Five)

e) Class for men was and is based on their relationship to the means of production: those who owned the means of production could dominate those who did not. For women, class is mediated through their sexual ties to a man, who then gives them access to material resources. This division of women into "respectable" (that is, attached to one man) and "not-respectable" (that is, not attached to one man or free of all men) is institutionalized in laws pertaining to the veiling of women. (Chapter Six)

f) Long after women are sexually and economically subordinated to men, they still play active and respected roles in mediating between humans and gods as priestesses, seers, diviners, and healers. Metaphysical female power, especially the power to give life, is worshipped by men and women in the form of powerful goddesses long after women are subordinated to men in most aspects of their lives on earth. (Chapter Seven)

g) The dethroning of the powerful goddesses and their replacement by a dominant male god occur in most Near Eastern societies following the establishment of a strong and imperialistic kingship. Gradually the function of controlling fertility, formerly entirely held by the goddesses, is symbolized through the symbolic or actual mating of the male god or God-King with the Goddess or her priestess. Finally, sexuality (eroticism) and procreativity are split in the emergence of separate goddesses for each function, and the Mother-Goddess is transformed into the wife/consort of the chief male God. (Chapter Seven)

h) The emergence of Hebrew monotheism takes the form of an attack on the widespread cults of the various fertility goddesses. In the writing of the Book of Genesis, creativity and procreativity are ascribed to all-powerful God, whose epithets of "Lord" and "King" establish him as a male god, and female sexuality other than for procreative purposes becomes associated with sin and evil. (Chapter Eight)

i) In the establishment of the covenant community the basic symbolism and the actual contract between God and humanity assumes as a given the subordinate position of women and their exclusion from the metaphysical covenant and the earthly covenant community. Their only access to God and to the holy community is in their function as mothers. (Chapter Nine)

j) The symbolic devaluing of women in relation to the divine becomes one of the founding metaphors of Western civilization. The other founding metaphor is supplied by Aristotelian philosophy which assumes as a given that women are incomplete and damaged human beings of an entirely different order than men (Chapter Ten).

It is with the creation of these two metaphorical constructs, which are built into the very foundations of the symbol system of Western civilization, that the subordination of women comes to be seen as "natural", hence it becomes invisible. It is this which finally establishes patriarchy firmly as an actuality and as an ideology." pages 8 -10

5) "Men punish, by ridicule, exclusion, or ostracism, any woman who assumes the right to interpret her own role or, worse,

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script, the props, the stage setting, and the direction are firmly held by men. When women begin to realize that and cluster together between the acts, or even during the performance, to discuss what to do about it, this play comes to an end." page 13

[Return to Table of Contents](#)**One: Origins**

1) "The qualities which may have fostered human survival in the Neolithic are no longer required of modern people. Regardless of whether qualities such as aggressiveness or nurturance are genetically or culturally transmitted, it should be obvious that the aggressiveness of males, which may have been highly functional in the Stone Age, is threatening human survival in the nuclear age. At a time when overpopulation and exhaustion of natural resources represents a real danger for human survival, to curb women's procreative capacities may be more "adaptive" than to foster them." page 20

[Return to Table of Contents](#)**Two: A Working Hypothesis**

1) "Once we abandon the concept of women as historical victims, acted upon by violent men, inexplicable "forces," and societal institutions, we must explain the central puzzle- woman's participation in the construction of the system that subordinates her." page 37

2) "The step from foraging to gathering food for later consumption, possibly by more than one individual, was crucial in advancing human development. It must have fostered social interaction, the invention and development of containers, and the slow evolutionary increase in brain size. Nancy Tanner suggests that females caring for their helpless infants had the most incentive to develop these skills, while males may have, for a long period, continued to forage alone. She speculates that it was these activities which led to the first use of tools for opening and dividing plant food with children and for digging for roots. At any rate, the infant's survival depended on the quality of maternal care. "Similarly, a mother's gathering effectiveness improved her own nutrition and thereby increased her life expectancy and fertility." " page 39 quote taken from Ruth Bleier, *Science and Gender: A Critique of Biology and Its Theories on Women*, New York, 1984, page 145

3) "It is from the Neolithic that we derive surviving evidence of cave paintings and sculptures suggesting the pervasive veneration of the Mother-Goddess. We can understand why men and women might have chosen this as their first form of religious expression by considering the psychological bond between mother and child." page 39

4) "It would follow that women would choose or prefer those economic activities which could be combined with their mothering duties. ...Thus, the first sexual division of labor, by which men did the big-game hunting and children and women the small-game hunting and food gathering, seems to derive from biological sex differences. These biological sex differences are not differences in the strength and endurance of men and women but solely reproductive differences, specifically women's ability to nurse babies." pages 41-42

5) Elise Boulding "tells us that food gathering demanded elaborate knowledge of the ecology, of plants and trees and roots, their properties as food and as medicine. She describes primitive women as guardians of the domestic fire, as the inventor of clay and woven vessels, by means of which the tribe's surplus could be saved for lean times. She describes woman as having elicited from plants and trees and fruits the secrets of transforming their products into healing substances, into dyes and hemp and yarn and clothing. Woman knew how to transform the raw materials and dead animals into nurturing products. Her skills must have been as manifold as those of man and certainly as essential. Her knowledge was perhaps greater or at least as great as his; it is easy to imagine that it would have seemed to her quite sufficient. In the development of ritual and rites, of music and dance and poetry, she had as much of a part as he did. And yet she must have known herself responsible of live-giving and nurturing. Woman, in precivilized society, must have been man's equal and may well have felt herself to be his superior." page 43

6) "The ego formation of the individual male, which must have taken place within a context of fear, awe, and possibly dread of the female, must have led men to create social institutions to bolster their egos, strengthen their self-confidence, and validate their sense of worth." page 45

7) matrilocality - man leaves his family of origin and resides in wife's family

partrilocality - woman leaves family of origin to reside in husband's family

8) "If men are exchanged between tribes, what would assure loyalty to new tribe? Men's weak bonds with offspring would not ensure their submission for the sake of their children. Men would be capable of violence against members of the strange tribe; with their experience in hunting and long distance travel they might easily escape and then return as warriors to seek vengeance. Women, on the other hand, would be more easily coerced, most likely by rape. Once married or mothers of children, they would give their loyalty to their children and to their children's relatives and would thus make a potentially strong bond with the tribe of affiliation. This was, in fact, the way slavery developed historically, as we will see later. Once again, woman's biological function made her more readily adaptable for this new, culturally created role of pawn.

One might also postulate that not women but children of both sexes might have been used as pawns for the purpose of assuring intertribal peace, as they were frequently used in historical time among ruling elites. Possibly, the practice of the exchange of women got started that way. Children of both sexes were exchanged and on maturity married into the new tribe.

Boulding, always stressing women's "agency", assumes that it was women- in their function of keepers of the homeplace- who engaged in the necessary negotiations which led to intertribal coupling. Women develop cultural flexibility and sophistication by their intertribal linkage role. Women, removed from their own culture, straddled two cultures and learn the ways of both. The knowledge they derive from this may give them access to power and certainly to influence.

I find Boulding's observations useful for reconstructing the gradual process by which women may have initiated or participated in establishing the exchange of women. In anthropological literature we have some examples of queens, in their role of head of state, acquiring many "wives" for whom they then arranged marriages which serve to increase the queen's wealth and influence.

If boys and girls were exchanged as pawns and their offspring were incorporated into the tribe to which they had been given, clearly the tribe holding more girls than boys would increase in population more rapidly than the tribe accepting boys. As long as children were a threat to the survival of the tribe or, at best, a liability, such distinctions would not be noticed or would not matter. But if, due to changes in the environment or in the tribal economy, children became an asset as potential labor power, one would expect the exchange of children of both sexes to give way to the exchange of women. The factors leading to this development are well explained, I believe, by Marxist structuralist anthropologists." pages 47 - 48

"The harvest, based on roots and cuttings, is unstable and subject to climatic variations. Their inability to preserve crops over several years makes people dependent on hunting, fishing, and gathering as food supplements. In this period, when matrilineal, matrilocal systems abound, group survival demands the demographic equalization of men and women. Meillassoux argues that women's biological vulnerability in childbirth led tribes to procure more women from other groups, and that this tendency toward theft of women led to constant intertribal warfare. In the process, a warrior culture emerged. Another consequence of this theft of women is that the conquered women were protected by the men who had conquered them or by the entire conquering tribe. In the process, women were thought of as possessions, as things- they became reified- while men became the reifiers because they conquered and protected. Women's reproductive capacity is first recognized as a tribal resource, then, as ruling elites develop, it is acquired as the property of a particular group.

This occurs with the development of agriculture. The material conditions of grain agriculture demand group cohesiveness and continuity over time, thus strengthening household structure. In order to produce a harvest, workers of one production cycle are indebted for food and seeds to workers of a previous production cycle. Since the amount of food depends on the availability of labor, production becomes the chief concern. This has two consequences: it strengthens the influence of older males and it increases the tribes' incentive for acquiring more women. In the fully developed society based on plow agriculture, women and children are indispensable to the production process, which is cyclical and labor intensive. Children have now become an economic asset. At this stage tribes seek to acquire the reproductive potential of women, rather than women themselves. Men do not produce babies directly; thus it is women, not men, who are exchanged. This practice becomes institutionalized in incest taboos and patrilocal marriage patterns. Elder males, who provide continuity in the knowledge pertaining to production, now mystify these "secrets" and wield power over the young men by controlling food, knowledge, and women. They control the exchange of women, enforce restrictions on their sexual behavior, and acquire private property in women. The young men must offer labor services to the old men for the privilege of gaining access to women. Under such circumstances women also become the spoil for the warriors, which encourages and reinforces the dominance of older men over the community. Finally, "women's world historic defeat" through the overthrow of matriliney and matrilocality is made possible, and it proves advantageous to the tribes who achieve it.

It should be noted that in Meillassoux's scheme the control over reproduction (women's sexuality) precedes the acquisition of private property. Thus, Meillassoux stands Engels on his head, a feat Marx performed for Hegel.

Meillassoux's work opens new vistas in the debate over origins, although feminist critics must object to his androcentric model, in which women figure only as passive victims. We should also note that Meillassoux's model makes it clear that it is not women who are being reified, but women's reproductive capacity, yet he and other structural anthropologists continue to speak of the reification of women." page 49-50

9) "Thus, the first appropriation of private property consists of the appropriation of the labor of women as reproducers. we must conclude that in the course of the agricultural revolution the exploitation of human labor and the sexual exploitation of women become inextricably linked.

The story of civilization is the story of men and women struggling up from necessity, from their helpless dependence on nature to freedom and partial mastery over nature. In this struggle women were longer confined to species-essential activities than men and were therefore more vulnerable to being disadvantaged" page 52

10) "There are a few facts of which we can be certain on the basis of archaeological evidence. Sometime during the agricultural revolution relatively egalitarian societies with a sexual division of labor based on biological necessity gave way to more highly structured societies in which both private property and the exchange of women based on incest taboos and exogamy were common. The earlier societies were often matrilineal and matrilocal, while the latter surviving societies were predominantly patrilineal and patrilocal. Nowhere is there any evidence of a reverse process, going from patriliney to matriliney." page 53

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Three: The Stand-in Wife and the Pawn

1) "In an ecologically constricted space, growing populations can be supplied only by increasing agricultural production or by expansion. The former leads to the development of elites, the latter to the development of militarism, first on a voluntary, then on an professional basis." page 56

2) "The first symbol systems, or tokens, developed in connection with trading activities and the keeping of accounts. Out of these tokens developed systems of counting and writing." page 57

3) "Military strong men would first become chieftains over villages and later establish their dominance over previously communally held temple lands and herds, gradually pushing priests into the background." page 57

"The development of militarism combined with the need for a large labor force for the construction of public projects led to the practice of turning captives into slaves and to the eventual institutionalization of slavery, and with it of structured classes." page 57

4) Regarding life in Mesopotamia: "We have seen ample evidence of societies in which the active participation of women in economic, religious, and political life was taken for granted. Equally taken for granted was their dependence on and obligation to male kin and/or husbands." page 74

"Queen Shibtu's role of "wife-as-deputy" is the highest to which such women can aspire. Their power derives entirely from the male on whom they depend. Their influence and actual role in shaping events are real, as is their power over men and women of lower rank whom they own or control. But in matters of sexuality, they are utterly subordinate to men. In fact, as we have seen in the case of several royal wives, their power in economic and political life depends on the adequacy of the sexual services they perform for their men. If they no longer please, as in the case of Kirum or Kunshimatum, they are out of power at the whim of their lord." pages 74-75

"Women, even the most secure high-born, and self-confident, thought of themselves as persons depending on the protection of a man. This is the female world of the social contract: women denied autonomy depend on protection and struggle to make the best deal possible for themselves and their children.

If we remember that we are here describing a historical period in which even formal law codes have not yet been written, we can begin to appreciate how deeply rooted patriarchal gender definitions are in Western civilization. The matrix of patriarchal relations between the sexes was already firmly in place before economic and political developments fully institutionalized the state and long before the ideology of patriarchy was developed." page 75

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Four: The Woman Slave

1) "Slavery, seldom, if ever, occurs in hunting/gathering societies but appears in widely separated regions and periods with the advent of pastoralism, and later agriculture, urbanization, and state formation." page 76

2) "The oppression of women antedates slavery and makes it possible. We have seen in the earlier chapters, how men and women constructed social relations which gave rise to dominance and hierarchies. We have seen how the confluence of a number of factors leads to sexual asymmetry and to a division of labor which fell with unequal weight upon men and women. Out of it, kinship structured social relations in such a way that women were exchanged in marriage and men had certain rights in women, which women did not have in men. Women's sexuality and reproductive potential became a commodity to be exchanged or acquired for the service of families; thus women were thought of as a group with less autonomy than men. In some societies, such as in China, women remained marginalized outsiders to their kin groups. While men "belonged in" a household or lineage, women "belonged to" males who had acquired rights in them. In most societies women are more vulnerable to becoming marginal than are men. Once deprived of the protection of male kin, through death, separation, or by no longer being wanted as a sexual partner, women become marginal. At the very beginning of state formation and the establishment of hierarchies and classes, men must have observed this greater vulnerability in women and learned from it that differences can be used to separate and divide one group of humans from another. These differences can be "natural" and biological, such as sex and age, or they can be man-made, such as captivity and branding." page 78

3) Quoting Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, page 6: "The refusal formally to recognize the social relations of the slave had profound emotional and social implications. In all slaveholding societies slave couples could be and were forcibly separated and the consensual "wives" of slaves were obliged to submit sexually to their masters; slaves had no custodial claims or powers over their children, and children inherited no claims or obligations of their parents." pages 79-80

4) "The impact on the conquered of the rape of conquered women was twofold: it dishonored the women and by implication served as a symbolic castration of their men. Men in patriarchal societies who cannot protect the sexual purity of their wives, sisters, and children are truly impotent and dishonored." page 80

"By experimenting with the enslavement of women and children, men learned to understand that all human beings have the potential for tolerating enslavement, and they developed the techniques and forms of enslavement which would enable them to make of the absolute dominance a social institution." page 81

"Physical terror and coercion, which were an essential ingredient in the process of turning free persons into slaves, took, for women, the form of rape. Women were subdued physically by rape; once impregnated, they might become psychologically attached to their masters." page 87

"The practice of using slave women as servants and sex objects became the standard for the class dominance over women in all historical periods. Women of the subordinate classes (serfs, peasants, workers) were expected to serve men of the upper classes sexually, whether they consented or not. The feudal droit de seigneur, the right of the first night, which belongs to the master who has granted his serf the right to marry, institutionalized an already well-established practice." page 88

5) Speaking of Mesopotamian society: "The father had the power of life and death over his children. He had the power to commit infanticide by exposure or abandonment. He could give his daughters in marriage in exchange for receiving a bride price even during their childhood, or he could consecrate them to a life of virginity in the temple service. A man could pledge his wife, his concubines and their children as pawns for his debt; if he failed to pay back the debt, these pledges were turned into slaves. Such power derived from a concept that a person's entire kin-group was to be held responsible for any wrongdoings of its members." page 89

6) "Thus, the nexus between sexual servitude to the master and economic service to the wife seems to be a distinguishing feature of concubinage under patriarchy." page 92

"Whether one wishes to view "concubinage" as an opportunity for upward mobility or as an added form of dominance and exploitation, the institution was not only structurally significant but crucial in helping men and women define their concept of freedom and unfreedom." page 95

"The domestic subordination of women provided the model out of which slavery developed as a social institution." page 99

"The freedom of other women, which was never the freedom of men, was contingent upon the enslavement of one woman, and it was always limited by restraints upon their mobility and their access to knowledge and skills. Conversely, for men, power was conceptually related to violence and sexual dominance. Male power is as contingent upon the availability of the sexual and economic services of women in the domestic realm as it is upon the availability and smooth performance of military power." page 100 (my emphasis)

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Five: The Wife and the Concubine

1) "Here we see the concept that rape injures the victim's father or husband carried to devastating conclusions for the woman affected: the victim of rape can expect an indissoluble marriage with the rapist; the totally innocent wife of the rapist will be turned into a prostitute. The language of the law gives us a sense of the absolute "power of disposal" of fathers in regard to their daughters. This reinforced by MAL SS 5, which provides that if the man swears that the raped girl has seduced him, his wife shall be spared; he shall pay a fine to the girl's father (for robbing her of her virginity and thus debasing her value) and "the father shall treat his daughter as he pleases." " page 117 (MAL is the name of a Mesopotamian law code.)

2) "We see then, in the thousand-year span we are discussing, how patriarchal dominance moved from private practice into public law. The control of female sexuality, previously left to individual husbands or to family heads, had now become a matter of state regulation. In this, it follows, of course, a general trend toward increasing state power and the establishment of public law.

The patriarchal family, first fully institutionalized in Hammurabic law, mirrored the archaic state in its mixture of paternalism and unquestioned authority. But what is most important to understand in order to comprehend the nature of the sex/gender system under which we still live is the reverse process: the archaic state, from its inception, recognized its dependence on the patriarchal family and equated the family's orderly functioning with order in the public domain. The metaphor of the patriarchal family as the cell, the basic building block, of the healthy organism of the public community was first expressed in Mesopotamian law. It has been constantly reinforced both in ideology and practice over three millennia." pages 121-122

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Six: Veiling the Woman

1) "Domestic women, sexually serving one man and under his protection, are here designated as "respectable" by being veiled; women not under one man's protection and sexual control are designated as "public women," hence unveiled." page 135

2) "Men take their place in the class hierarchy based on their occupation or on their father's social status. Their class position may be expressed by the usual outward sign- clothing, residential location, ornaments or their absence. For women, from MAL SS 40 forward, class distinctions are based on their relationship- or absence of such- to a man who protects them, and on their sexual activities. The division of women into "respectable women," who are protected by their men, and "disreputable women," who are out in the street unprotected by men and free to sell their services, has been the basic class division for women. It has marked off the limited privileges of upper-class women against the economic and sexual oppression of lower-class women and has divided one from the other. Historically, it has impeded cross-class alliances among women and obstructed the formation of feminist consciousness.

The Code of Hammurabi marks the beginning of the institutionalization of the patriarchal family as an aspect of state

power. It reflects a class society in which women's status depended on the male family head's social status and property. The wife of an impoverished burgher could by a change of his status, without her volition or action, be turned from a respectable woman into a debt slave or a prostitute. On the other hand, a married woman's sexual behavior, such as adultery or an unmarried woman's loss of chastity, could declass her in a way in which no man could be declassified by his sexual activity. Women's class status is always differently defined than that of men of their class from that period on to the present.

From the Old Babylonian period to the time when the husband has power of life or death over the adulterous wife there have been great changes also in the authority of kings and ruler over the lives of men and women. The patriarchal head of the family at the time of Hammurabi was still somewhat restrained in his power over his wife by kinship obligations to the male head of the wife's family. By the time of the Middle Assyrian laws he is restrained mostly by the power of the state. Fathers, empowered to treat the virginity of their daughters as a family property asset, represent an authority as absolute as that of the king. Children reared and socialized within such authority will grow into the kinds of citizens needed in an absolute kingship. The king's power was secured by men as absolutely dependent on and subservient to him as their families were dependent on and subservient to them. The archaic state was shaped and developed in the form of patriarchy." pages 139-140

3) **"The sexual regulation of women underlies the formation of classes and is one of the foundations on which the state rests."** page 140 (my emphasis)

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Seven: The Goddess

1) "There was a considerable time lag between the subordination of women in patriarchal society and the declassing of the goddesses." page 141

2) "What we know of religious practices in the Ancient Near East comes to us in the form of literary and religious documents preserved in clay tablets. These are overwhelmingly the product of priestly scribes associated with various temples or palaces. Even if we disregard ideological distortions and alterations in basic texts in the interests of a particular divinity or royal personage, we must understand that what we are analyzing here are those myths and texts transmitted and approved by a societal elite. The recorded versions of the myths and theogonies may have enjoyed widespread popular support, but we cannot be sure of that. The shift from the Mother-Goddess to the thunder-god may be more prescriptive than descriptive. It may tell us more about what the upper class or royal servants, bureaucrats, and warriors wanted the population to believe than what the population actually did believe.

For in the very centuries in which we have been tracing changes in the direction of patriarchal god-figures, the cult of certain goddesses flourished and diffused ever more widely. The Great Goddess may have been demoted in the pantheon of the gods, but she continued to be worshipped in her manifestations. All Assyriologists testify to her enormous popularity and the persistence of her cult, in various guises, in all the major cities of the Near East for nearly two thousand years. The ancient Mother-Goddesses absorbed the features and characteristics of similar goddesses in other regions, as their cults diffused in the wake of conquests and territorial occupations." pages 158-159

3) "We may be justified in regarding the extraordinary persistence of fertility and goddess cults as an expression of female resistance to the predominance of male god figures. There is as yet no hard evidence to prove this speculation, but it is difficult to explain the persistence of these female cults in any other way.

In the second millennium B.C. men and women stood in the same relation to the mysterious and awesome forces represented by the gods and goddesses. Gender distinctions were not yet used to explain the causes of evil and the problem of death. The cause of pain and human suffering was the sinfulness of men and women and their neglect of their duty toward the gods. And the kingdom of death, in Mesopotamian belief, was as likely to be governed by a female supernatural as not. The great philosophical questions: who creates human life? who speaks to God? could still be answered: human beings, men and women.

No matter how degraded and commoditized the reproductive and sexual power of woman was in real life, their essential equality could not be banished from thought and feeling as long as the goddesses lived and were believed to rule human life. Women must have found their likeness in the goddess, as men found theirs in the male gods. There was a perceived and

essential equality of human beings before the gods, which must have radiated out into daily life. The power and mystery of the priestess was as great as that of the priest. As long as women still mediated between humans and the supernatural, they might perform different functions and roles in society than those of men, but their essential equality as human beings remained unassailed" pages 159-160

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Eight: The Patriarchs refers to the Jewish Patriarchs

1) Recitation of Abraham's journey from Haran, Joseph in Egypt, Deborah's prophecy, Saul and David uniting the tribes, and stories of Leah and Rachel

2) "In general, the married Jewish woman occupied an inferior position to that of her counterpart in Mesopotamian society." page 171

3) Lerner mentions the story of Lot in Sodom, the Levite retrieving his concubine (Judges 19:1-21,25) and the ensuing Benjamite wars to demonstrate the low status women held in Jewish society. Specifically, Men could do anything to their wives, daughters, concubines, or slave women including send them out to be gang raped and murdered.

4) "This new order under the all-powerful God proclaimed to Hebrews and to all who took the Bible as their moral and religious guide that woman cannot speak to God." page 179

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Nine: The Covenant refers to the Old Testament Covenant between God and the Hebrews

1) Lerner discusses Genesis in detail

2) Genesis 17:14 "And the uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that soul shall be cut off from his people, he hath broken My covenant."

"Acceptance of monotheism, circumcision, and observance of God's laws as given to Moses are the obligations of the chosen people and will mark them off from their neighbors. But their cohesion and purity must be guaranteed by male circumcision and strict female virginity before marriage. Sexual control which ensures the dominance of the father is here elevated not merely to a human social arrangement incorporated into man-made law, as, for example, in the Mesopotamian law codes- it is presented as the will of God expressed in His covenant with the men of Israel.

To the question "Who creates life?," Genesis answers, Yahweh and the God-like male he created." page 193

3) Referring to Mesopotamian myths: "In these myths the gods jealously guard their power to grant immortality. Men who aspire to divine knowledge are blamed for bringing evil into the world. We might also note that the means by which humans acquire divine knowledge is by eating and drinking certain substances and by sexual intercourse." page 194

4) From Lerner's discussion of the Fall from Genesis

The snake represents the fertility goddess.

God puts enmity between woman and the snake - God forbids the free and open sexuality of the fertility goddess.

Eve's punishment (both are essential for the establishment of patriarchy) :

- a) Eve is to be severed from the snake, the fertility goddess, a requirement for the creation of a monotheistic religion headed by a male god.
- b) Eve is to be ruled by her husband.

Eve becomes the mother of all living things.

5) "To the question "Who brought sin and death into the world?" Genesis answers, "Woman, in her alliance with the snake, which stands for free female sexuality." It is quite in line with such thinking that women should be excluded from active

participation in the covenant community and that the very symbol of that community and that compact with God should be a male symbol." page 198

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Ten: Symbols

1) "Hebrew monotheism conceptualized a universe created by a single force- God's will. The source of creativity, then, was the invisible, ineffable God. He created male and female in a significantly differently way, out of different substance, though each enlivened by his divine breath. He covenanted and contracted only with males. Circumcision as the symbol of the covenant expresses that reality.

Only males could mediate between God and humans. This was symbolically expressed in the all-male priesthood, the various ways of excluding women from the most essential and meaningful religious ritual: i. e., their exclusion from the formation of the minyan; their segregated seating in the temple; their exclusion as active participants from the temple service, etc. Women were denied equal access to religious learning and the priesthood, and thereby they were denied the capacity of interpreting and altering the religious belief system.

We have seen how procreativity and creativity were severed in the creation process of monotheism. God's blessing of man's seed which would be planted in the passive receptacle of woman's womb symbolically defined gender relations under patriarchy. And in the story of the Fall, woman, and more specifically, female sexuality became the symbol of human weakness and the source of evil." page 201

2) "The doctrine of male procreativity reappears in its most developed form in the work of Aristotle. It is in this form that it had its determining and shaping influence on Western science and philosophy." pages 205-206

"These definitions of women as mutilated males, devoid of the principle of soul, are not isolated but rather permeate Aristotle's biological and philosophical work. He is quite consistent in reasoning that the biological inferiority of woman must make her inferior also in her capacities, her ability to reason and therefore her ability to make decisions. From this follows Aristotle's definition of gender and its integration into his political thought." page 207

"Aristotle's grand and daring explanatory system, which encompassed and transcended most of the knowledge then available in his society, incorporated the patriarchal gender concept of inferiority of women in such a way as to make it indisputable and, in fact, invisible." page 210

"In the democratic polis based on slavery, about which Aristotle was writing, the very definition of citizenship had to exclude all those deemed inferior- helots, slaves, women. Thus, Aristotle's political science institutionalizes and rationalizes the exclusion of women from political citizenship as the very foundation of the democratic polity. It is this heritage, not the utopian thought of Plato, which Western civilization would use for centuries in its science, its philosophy, and its gender doctrine." page 211

3) "With the Bible's fallen Eve and Aristotle's woman as mutilated male, we see the emergence of two symbolic constructs which assert and assume the existence of two kinds of human beings- the male and the female- different in their essence, their function, and their potential. This metaphoric construct, the "inferior and not quite completed female," became embedded in every major explanatory system in such a way as to take on the life and force of actuality. On the unexamined assumption that this stereotype represented reality, institutions denied women equal rights and access to privileges, educational deprivation for women became justified and given the sanctity of tradition and patriarchal dominance for millennia, appeared justified and natural. For patriarchally organized society, this symbolic construct represented an essential ingredient in the order and structure of civilization." page 211

4) "But we should note, in summary, the way in which inequality among men and women was built not only into the language, thought, and philosophy of Western civilization, but the way in which gender itself became a metaphor defining power relations in such a way as to mystify them and render them invisible." page 211

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Eleven: The Creation of Patriarchy A Summary

1) "Class for men was and is based on their relationship to the means of production: those who owned the means of production could dominate those who did not." page 215

2) "For women, class is mediated through their sexual ties to a man." page 215

3) "Reforms and legal changes, while ameliorating the condition of women and an essential part of the process of emancipating them, will not basically change patriarchy. Such reforms need to be integrated within a vast cultural revolution in order to transform patriarchy and thus abolish it.

The system of patriarchy can function only with the cooperation of women. This cooperation is secured by a variety of means: gender indoctrination; educational deprivation; the denial to women of knowledge of their history; the dividing of women, one from the other, by defining "respectability" and "deviance" according to women's sexual activities; by restraints and outright coercion; by discrimination in access to economic resources and political power; and by awarding class privileges to conforming women." page 217 (my emphasis)

4) "The basis of paternalism is an unwritten contract for exchange: economic support and protection given by the male for subordination in all matters, sexual service, and unpaid domestic service given by the female. Yet the relationship frequently continues in fact and in law, even when the male partner has defaulted on his obligation.

It was a rational choice for women, under conditions of public powerlessness and economic dependency, to choose strong protectors for themselves and their children." page 218

5) "Women have for millennia participated in the process of their own subordination because they have been psychologically shaped so as to internalize the idea of their own inferiority. The unawareness of their own history of struggle and achievement has been one of the major means of keeping women subordinate.

The connectedness of women to familial structures made any development of female solidarity and group cohesiveness extremely problematic." page 218

6) "Other oppressed classes and groups were impelled toward group consciousness by the very conditions of their subordinate status. The slave could clearly mark a line between the interests and bonds to his/her own family and the ties of subservience/ protection linking him/her with the master. In fact, protection by slave parents of their own family against the master was one of the most important causes of slave resistance. "Free" women, on the other hand, learned early that their kin would cast them out, should they ever rebel against their dominance. In traditional and peasant societies there are many recorded instances of female family members tolerating and even participating in the chastisement, torture, even death of a girl who had transgressed against the family "honor." " page 219

7) "Most significant of all the impediments toward developing group consciousness for women was the absence of a tradition which would reaffirm the independence and autonomy of women at any period in the past. There had never been any woman or group of women who had lived without male protection, as far as most women knew. There had never been any group of persons like them who had done anything significant for themselves. Women had no history- so they were told; so they believed. Thus, ultimately, it was men's hegemony over the symbol system which most decisively disadvantaged women.

Male hegemony over the symbol system took two forms: educational deprivation of women and male monopoly on definition." page 219

8) "We have seen how men appropriated and then transformed the major symbols of female power: the power of the Mother-Goddess and the fertility goddesses. We have seen how men constructed theologies based on the counterfactual metaphor of male procreativity and redefined female existence in a narrow and sexually dependent way. We have seen, finally, how the very metaphors for gender have expressed the male as norm and the female as deviant; the male as whole and powerful, the female as unfinished, mutilated, and lacking in autonomy. On the basis of such symbolic constructs, embedded in Greek philosophy, the Judeo-Christian theologies, and the legal tradition on which Western civilization is built, men have explained the world in their own terms and defined the important questions so as to make themselves the center of discourse.

By making the term "man" subsume "woman" and arrogate to itself the representation of all humanity, men have built a conceptual error of vast proportion into all of their thought." page 220

9) "The myth that women are marginal to the creation of history and civilization has profoundly affected the psychology of women and men. It has given men a skewed and essentially erroneous view of their place in human society and in the universe." pages 221-222

10) "We have long known that rape has been a way of terrorizing us and keeping us in subjection. Now we also know that we have participated, although unwittingly, in the rape of our minds." page 225

11) "Women's lack of knowledge of our own history of struggle and achievement has been one of the major means of keeping us subordinate." page 226

12) "To be woman-centered means: asking if women were central to this argument, how would it be defined? It means ignoring all evidence of women's marginality, because, even where women appear to be marginal, this is the result of patriarchal intervention; frequently also it is inconceivable for anything ever to have taken place in the world in which women were not involved, except if they were prevented from participation through coercion and repression." page 228

13) "To step outside of patriarchal thought means: Being skeptical toward every known system of thought; being critical of all assumptions, ordering values, and definitions." page 228

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