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**Response to:**

**Simians, Cyborgs and Women (by Donna J. Haraway)**

**Chapter 1: Animal Sociology and a Natural Economy of the Body Politic: A Political Physiology of Dominance**

Donna J. Haraway is an American socialist-feminist author who is very interested in feminist studies, ecofeminism and posthumanism. Her book, “Simians, Cyborgs and Women”, according to Haraway herself, is a cautionary tale about the evolution of bodies, politics and stories, and about the invention and re-invention of nature. It discusses the Euro-American feminist humanism in narratives highly influence by racism and colonialism. From the title, we can understand that Haraway is building up a context for the idea of body politics and dominance of certain bodies over others, where simians (primates, apes etc.), cyborgs and women represent the submissives.

In the first chapter, Haraway focuses on the political physiology of dominance by critiquing on how natural sciences, especially animal sociology, are used to model human behaviors and favor the dominant discourses of the body politic. By body politic, we mean the practices and policies through which powers of society regulate the human body, as well as the struggle over the degree of individual and social control of the body. Contemporary societies tend to segregate not only access to political power but also work, religious life, domestic work, and intimate relationships according to the sex and race of the bodies they organize. Our social, economic, and political worlds are organized to reflect these habitual and legal patterns. The text examines feminist struggles over the modes of producing knowledge about, and the meanings of, the behavior and the social lives of monkeys and apes.

Freud[[1]](#footnote-1), Brown[[2]](#footnote-2), and Firestone[[3]](#footnote-3) played great role in the theories of the political and physiological organs of the body politic because they all begin their explanations with sexuality, add a dynamic of cultural repression, and then attempt to liberate again the personal and collective body. The union of the political and physiological has been a major source of both ancient and modern justifications for domination, based especially on differences seen as natural, given, inescapable, and moral.

The idea of body politic is not new. Haraway talks about the Greek notions of body politics according to which human societies should be considered as one body. Throughout the early period of the industrial revolution as well, a particularly important development of the theory of the body politic linked the natural and political economy on multiple levels, forming the foundations for capitalist industrialism. The modem evolutionary concept of a population as the fundamental natural group, owes much to classical ideas of the body politic.

In conclusion, the principle of domination is so deeply embedded in natural sciences especially the ones related to explanations for social groups and behaviors. General exclusion of women from science and their exploitation are fruits of our position in the social division of labor and not of natural incapacities. We have allowed the theory of the body politic to be split in such a way that natural knowledge is reincorporated covertly into techniques of social control instead of being transformed into sciences of liberation.

1. Sigmund Freud, Austrian neurologist and the founder of psychoanalysis. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Norman Oliver Brown, American scholar, writer, and social philosopher. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Shulamith Firestone, Canadian-American radical feminist. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)