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For

Virginia Warner Brodine and Elizabeth Kamarck Minnich

whose thought has challenged and confirmed mine
and whose friendship and love
have strengthened and supported me

TWO

A *Working* Hypothesis

THE BASIC ASSUMPTION with which we must start any theorizing about the past is that men and women built civilization jointly.[1] Starting as we do from the end result and reasoning back, we thus ask a different question than that of a single-cause "origin." We ask: how did men and women in their society-building and in the construction of what we call Western civilization arrive at the present state? 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. I suggest that abandoning the search for an empowering past—the search for matriarchy—is the first step in the right direction. The creation of compensatory myths of the distant past of women will not emancipate women in the present and the future.[2] The patriarchal mode of thought is so built into our mental processes that we cannot exclude it unless we first make ourselves consciously aware of it, which always means a special effort. Thus, in thinking about the prehistoric past of women, we are so much locked into the explanatory androcentric system that the only alternate model that readily comes to mind is that of reversal. If not patriarchy, then there must have been matriarchy. Undoubtedly there were many different modes in which men and women organized society and allocated power and resources. None of the archaeological evidence we have is conclusive and sufficient to allow us to construct a scientifically sound model of

that important period of the transition from Neolithic hunting/gathering to sedentary agricultural societies. The way of the anthropologists, who offer us examples of contemporary hunting/gathering societies and draw from them inferences about societies in the fifth millennium B.C., is no less speculative than is that of the philosopher and the specialist in religious studies who reason from literature and myths. The point is that most of the speculative models have been androcentric and have assumed the naturalness of patriarchy, and the few feminist models have been ahistorical and therefore, to my mind, unsatisfactory.

A correct analysis of our situation and how it came to be what it is will help us to create an empowering theory. We must think about gender historically and specifically as it occurs in varied and changeable societies. The anthropologist Michelle Rosaldo arrived at similar conclusions, although starting from a different vantage point. She wrote:

> To look for origins is, in the end, to think that what we are today is something other than the product of our history and our present social world, and, more particularly, that our gender systems are primordial, transhistorical and essentially unchanging in their roots.[3]

Our search, then, becomes a search for the history of the patriarchal system. To give the system of male dominance historicity and to assert that its functions and manifestations change over time is to break sharply with the handed-down tradition. This tradition has mystified patriarchy by making it ahistoric, eternal, invisible, and unchanging. But it is precisely due to changes in the social and educational opportunities available to women that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries large numbers of women finally became capable of critically evaluating the process by which we have helped to create the system and maintain it. We are only now able to conceptualize women's role in history and thereby to create a consciousness which can emancipate women. This consciousness can also liberate men from the unwanted and undesired consequences of the system of male dominance.

Approaching this quest as historians, we must abandon single-factor explanations. We must assume that if and when events occur simultaneously their relationship to each other is not necessarily causal. We must assume that changes as complex as a basic alteration in kinship structures most likely occurred as the result of a variety of interacting forces. We must test whatever hypothesis we

have developed for one model comparatively and cross-culturally. Women's position in society must be viewed always also in comparison with that of the men of their social group and of their time.

We must prove our case not only by material evidence but by evidence from written sources. While we will look for the occurrence of "patterns" and similarities, we must be open to the possibility that similar outcomes, deriving from a variety of factors, might occur as the result of very different processes. Above all, we must view the position of women in society as subject to change over time, not only in its form but also in its meaning. For example, the social role of "concubine" cannot be evaluated by twentieth- or even nineteenth-century standards when we are studying it in the first millennium B.C. This is so obvious an example that to cite it may seem unnecessary, and yet just such errors occur frequently in the discussion of women's past. In particular, gender has, in most societies, such a strong symbolic as well as ideological and legal significance that we cannot truly understand it unless we pay attention to all aspects of its meaning.

The hypothetical construct I will offer is intended only as one of a number of possible models. Even on the limited geographic terrain of the Ancient Near East there must have been many different ways in which the transition to patriarchy took place. Since we will most likely never know just what happened, we are constrained to speculate on what might have been possible. Such utopian projections into the past serve an important function for those who wish to create theory—to know what might have been possible opens us up to new interpretations. It allows us to speculate about what might be possible in the future, free of the confines of a limited and entirely outdated conceptual framework.

Let us begin with the transitional period when hominids evolved from primates, some three million years ago, and let us consider the most basic dyad, mother and child. The first characteristic distinguishing humans from other primates is the prolonged and helpless infancy of the human child. This is the direct result of bipedalism, which led to the narrowing of the female pelvis and birth canal due to upright posture. One result of this was that human babies were born at a greater stage of immaturity than other primates, with relatively smaller heads in order to ease passage through the birth canal. Further, in contrast to the most highly developed apes, human babies are born naked and therefore must experience a greater need for warmth. They cannot grasp their mothers for steady support, lacking the apes' movable toe, so mothers must use their hands or, later, mechanical substitutes for hands to cradle their infants against them.[4] Bipedalism and upright posture led also to the finer development of the hand, the grasping thumb, and greater sensory–hand coordination. One consequence of this is that the human brain develops for many years during the child's period of infancy and complete dependency, and that it is therefore subject to modification through learning and intense cultural molding in a way that is decisively different from animal development. The neurophysiologist Ruth Bleier uses these facts in a telling argument against any theories claiming "innate" human characteristics.[5]

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."[6]

We postulate, as Tanner and Bleier do, that in the slow advance from upright hominids to the fully developed humans of the Neanderthal period (100,000 B.C.) the role of females was crucial. Sometime after that period large-scale hunting by groups of men developed in Africa, Europe, and Northern Asia; the earliest evidence for the existence of bows and arrows can be dated only to 15,000 years ago. Since most of the explanations for the existence of a sexual division of labor postulate the existence of hunting/gathering societies, we need to look more closely at such societies in the Paleolithic and early Neolithic periods.

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. We owe our insights into the complexities and importance of that bond largely to modern psychoanalytic accounts.[7] As Freud has shown us, the

child's first experience of the world is one in which the total environment and the self are barely separated. The environment, which consists mostly of the mother as the source of food, warmth, and pleasure, only gradually becomes differentiated from the self, as the infant smiles or cries to secure gratification of its needs. When the infant's needs are not met and it experiences anxiety and pain associated with cold and hunger, it learns to acknowledge the overwhelming power of "the other out there," the mother. Modern psychological studies have given us detailed accounts of the complex interaction between mother and child and of the ways in which the mother's body response, her smile, her speech help to form the child's concept of world and self. It is in this humanizing interaction that the infant begins to derive pleasure in its ability to impose its will on the environment. The striving for autonomy and the recognition of selfhood are produced in the infant's struggle against the overwhelming presence of the mother.

The psychoanalytic accounts on which these generalizations are based derive from the study of motherhood in modern Western societies. Even so, they stress the crucial importance of the infant's experience of utter dependency and of the mother's overwhelming power for the character formation and identity of the individual. At a time when laws against infanticide as well as the availability of bottle feeding, heated rooms, and blankets provide infants with societal protection, regardless of the mother's inclinations, this "overwhelming power of the mother" seems more symbolic than real. For over two hundred years or more, other caretakers, male and female, could, if the need arose, provide maternal services to an infant without endangering that infant's chances of survival. Civilized society has interposed itself between mother and child and has altered motherhood. But under primitive conditions, before the institutions of civilized society were created, the actual power of the mother over the infant must have been awesome. Only the mother's arms and care sheltered the infant from cold; only her breast milk could provide the nourishment needed for survival. Her indifference or neglect meant certain death. The life-giving mother truly had power over life and death. No wonder that men and women, observing this dramatic and mysterious power of the female, turned to the veneration of Mother-Goddesses.[8]

My point here is to stress the *necessity*, which created the initial division of labor by which women do the mothering. For millennia group survival depended upon it, and no alternative was available.

Under the extreme and dangerous conditions under which primitive humans lived, the survival into adulthood of at least two children for each coupling pair necessitated many pregnancies for each woman. Accurate data on prehistoric life span are hard to come by, but estimates based on skeletal studies place the average Paleolithic and Neolithic life-span between thirty and forty years. In the detailed study of 222 adult skeletons from Čatal Hüyük earlier cited, Lawrence Angel arrives at an average adult male life length of 34.3 years, with a female life length of 29.8 years. (This excludes from consideration those who died in childhood.)[9]

Women would need to have had more pregnancies than live births, as continued to be the case also in historic times in agricultural societies. Infancy was much prolonged, since mothers nursed their infants for two to three years. Thus, we may assume that it was absolutely essential for group survival that most nubile women devote most of their adulthood to pregnancy, child-bearing, and nursing. One would expect that men and women would accept such necessity and construct beliefs, mores, and values within their cultures to sustain such necessary practices.

It would follow that women would choose or prefer those economic activities which could be combined easily with their mothering duties. Although it is reasonable to assume that some women in every tribe or band were physically able to hunt, it would follow that women would not want to hunt regularly for big game, because of their being physically encumbered by children carried in the womb, on the hip, or on the back. Further, while a baby slung on the back might not prevent a mother from participating in hunting, a crying baby might. Examples cited by anthropologists of hunting/gathering tribes in the contemporary world, in which alternate arrangements are made for child care and in which women occasionally do take part in hunting, do not contradict the above argument.[10] They merely show what it is possible for societies to arrange and to try; they do not show what was the likely historically predominant mode which enabled societies to survive. Obviously, given the precarious and short life spans I have cited above for the Neolithic period, tribes which put the lives of their nubile women at risk by hunting or by participating in warfare, thereby also increasing the likelihood of their injury in accidents, would not tend to survive as well as tribes in which these women were otherwise employed. 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.[11] 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. Having said this, I want to stress that my acceptance of a "biological explanation" holds only for the earliest stages of human development and does not mean that a later sexual division of labor based on women's mothering is "natural." On the contrary, I will show that male dominance is a *historic* phenomenon in that it arose out of a biologically determined given situation and became a culturally created and enforced structure over time.

My synthesis does not mean to imply that all primitive societies are so organized as to prevent mothers from economic activity. We know from the study of past and present primitive societies that groups find various ways of structuring the division of labor for child-rearing so as to free mothers for a great variety of economic activities. Some mothers take their children with them over long distances; in other cases older children and old people act as child-tenders.[12] Clearly, the link between child-bearing and child-rearing for women is culturally determined and subject to societal manipulation. My point is to stress that the earliest sexual division of labor by which women *chose* occupations compatible with their mothering and child-raising activities were *functional*, hence acceptable to men and women alike.

Prolonged and helpless human infancy creates the strong mother-child bond. This socially necessary relationship is fortified by evolution during the earliest stages of humankind's development. Faced with new situations and changing environments, tribes and groups in which women did not mother well or which did not guard the health and survival of their nubile women, probably could not and did not survive. Or, seen another way, groups that accepted and institutionalized a functional sexual division of labor were more likely to survive.

We can only speculate on the personalities and self-perceptions of people living under such conditions as prevailed in the Neolithic. Necessity must have imposed restraints on men as well as on women. It took courage to leave the shelter of cave or hut to confront wild animals with primitive weapons, to roam far from home and risk encounters with potentially hostile neighboring tribes. Men and women must have developed the courage necessary for self-defense and the defense of the young. Because of their culture-bound tendency to focus on the activities of men, ethnographers have given

us much information about the consequences for the development of self-confidence and competence in man the hunter. Basing herself on ethnographic evidence, Simone de Beauvoir has speculated that it was this early division of labor from which the inequality between the sexes springs and which has doomed woman to "immanence"—to the pursuit of daily, never-ending repetitious toil—as against the daring exploits of man, which lead him to "transcendence." Tool-making, inventions, the development of weapons are all described as deriving from man's activities in pursuit of subsistence.[13] But the psychological growth of women has received far less attention and has usually been described in terms befitting a modern housewife more than a member of a Stone Age tribe. Elise Boulding, in her overview of women's past, has synthesized anthropological scholarship to present a considerably different interpretation. Boulding sees in the Neolithic societies an egalitarian sharing of work, in which each sex developed appropriate skills and knowledge essential for group survival. She 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 woman as guardian of the domestic fire, as the inventor of clay and woven vessels, by means of which the tribe's surpluses 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 for life-giving and nurturance. Woman, in precivilized society, must have been man's equal and may well have felt herself to be his superior.[14]

Psychoanalytic literature and most recently Nancy Chodorow's feminist reinterpretation provide us with useful descriptions of the process by which gender is created out of the fact that women do the mothering of children. Let us see if these theories have validity for describing a process of historical development. Chodorow argues that "the relationship to the mother differs in systematic ways for boys and girls, beginning in the earliest periods."[15] Boys and girls learn to expect from women the infinite, accepting love of a mother,

but they also associate with women their fears of powerlessness. In order to find their identity, boys develop themselves as other-than-the-mother; they identify with the father and turn away from emotional expression toward action in the world. Because it is women who do the mothering of children, Chodorow says:

> . . . growing girls come to define and experience themselves as continuous with others; their experience of self contains more flexible or permeable ego boundaries. Boys come to define themselves as more separate and distinct, with a greater sense of rigid ego boundaries and differentiation. The basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate.[16]

By the way in which their selfhood is defined against the nurturant mother, boys are prepared for participation in the public sphere. Girls, identifying with the mother and always keeping their close primary relationship with her, even as they transfer their love interest to men, are prepared for greater participation in "relational spheres." Gender-defined boys and girls are prepared "to assume the adult gender roles which situate women primarily within the sphere of reproduction in a sexually unequal society."[17]

Chodorow's sophisticated feminist reinterpretation of the Freudian explanation for the creation of gendered personalities is grounded in industrial Western society and its kinship and familial relations. It is doubtful that it is even applicable to people of color living within such societies, which should make us cautious about generalizing from it. Still, she makes a strong argument for the psychological undergirding upon which social relations and institutions rest. She and others argue convincingly that we must look to "motherhood" in patriarchal society, its structure and the relationships it engenders, if we wish to alter the relations of the sexes and end the subordination of women.[18]

I would speculate that the kind of personality formation Chodorow describes as the result of women mothering children in present-day industrialized societies did not occur in primitive societies of the Neolithic. Rather, women's mothering and nurturing activities, associated with their self-sufficiency in food gathering and their sense of competence in many, varied life-essential skills, must have been experienced by men and women as a source of strength and, probably, magic power. In some societies women jealously guarded their group "secrets," their magic, their knowledge of healing herbs. The anthropologist Lois Paul, reporting on a twentieth-century Guatemalan Indian village, says that the mystery and awe surrounding menstruation contributes in women "to a sense of participation in the mystic powers of the universe." Women manipulate men's fear that menstrual blood will threaten their virility by making of menstruation a symbolic weapon.[19]

In civilized society it is girls who have the greatest difficulty in ego formation. I would speculate that in primitive society that burden must have been on boys, whose fear and awe of the mother had to be transformed by collective action into identification with the male group. Whether mothers and their young children bonded with other such mother-child groups for their gathering and food-processing activities or whether men took the initiative in bringing young boys within their group must remain a matter of conjecture. The evidence from surviving primitive societies shows many different ways in which the sexual division of labor is structured into societal institutions, which bond young boys to males: sex-segregated preparation for initiation rites; membership in same-sex lodges and participation in same-sex rituals are just some of the examples. Inevitably, big-game hunting bands would have led to male bonding, which must have been greatly strengthened by warfare and the preparation necessary to turn boys into warriors. Just as effective mothering skills of women were essential to ensuring tribal survival and must have therefore been greatly appreciated, so were the hunting and warfare skills of men. One can easily postulate that those tribes which did not develop men skilled in warfare and defense eventually succumbed to those tribes that fostered these skills in their men. These evolutionary arguments have frequently been made, but I am here arguing also in favor of a psychological argument based on changing historical conditions. 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.

Theorists have offered a variety of hypotheses to explain the rise of man, the warrior, and the propensity of men to create militaristic structures. These have ranged from biological explanations (men's higher testosterone levels and greater strength make them more aggressive) to psychological ones (men compensate for their inability to bear children by sexual dominance over women and by aggression toward other men). Freud saw the origin of male aggressiveness in the Oedipal rivalry of father and son for the love of the mother and

postulated that men built civilization to compensate for the frustration of their sexual instincts in early childhood. Feminists, beginning with Simone de Beauvoir, have been greatly influenced by such ideas, which made it possible to explain patriarchy as caused either by male biology or by male psychology. Thus, Susan Brownmiller sees man's *ability* to rape women leading to their *propensity* to rape women and shows how this has led to male dominance over women and to male supremacy. Elizabeth Fisher ingeniously argued that the domestication of animals taught men their role in procreation and that the practice of the forced mating of animals led men to the idea of raping women. She claimed that the brutalization and violence connected with animal domestication led to men's sexual dominance and institutionalized aggression. More recently, Mary O'Brien built an elaborate explanation of the origin of male dominance on men's psychological need to compensate for their inability to bear children through the construction of institutions of dominance and, like Fisher, dated this "discovery" in the period of the discovery of animal domestication.[20]

These hypotheses, while they lead us in interesting directions, all suffer from the tendency to seek single-cause explanations, and those basing their arguments on the discoveries connected with animal husbandry are factually wrong. Animal husbandry was introduced, at least in the Near East, around 8000 B.C., and we have evidence of relatively egalitarian societies, such as in Çatal Hüyük, which practiced animal husbandry 2000 to 4000 years later. There cannot therefore be a causal connection. It seems to me far more likely that the development of intertribal warfare during periods of economic scarcity fostered the rise to power of men of military achievement. As we will discuss later, their greater prestige and standing may have increased their propensity to exercise authority over women and later over men of their own tribe. But these factors alone could not have been sufficient to explain the vast societal changes which occurred with the advent of sedentarism and agriculture. To understand these in all their complexity our theoretical model must now take into consideration the practice of the exchange of women.[21]

The "exchange of women," a phenomenon observed in tribal societies in many different areas of the world, has been identified by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss as the leading cause of female subordination. It may take many different forms, such as the forceful removal of women from their home tribe (bride stealing); ritual defloration or rape; negotiated marriages. It is always preceded by taboos on endogamy and by the indoctrination of women, from earliest childhood on, to an acceptance of their obligation to their kin to consent to such enforced marriages. Lévi Strauss says:

> The total relationship of exchange which constitutes marriage is not established between a man and a woman . . . but between two groups of men, and the woman figures only as one of the objects in the exchange, not as one of the partners. . . . This remains true even when the girl's feelings are taken into consideration, as, moreover, is usually the case. In acquiescing to the proposed union, she precipitates or allows the exchange to take place; she cannot alter its nature.[22]

Lévi-Strauss reasons that in this process women are "reified"; they become dehumanized and are thought of more as things than as humans.

A number of feminist anthropologists have accepted this position and have elaborated on this theme. Matrilocality structures kinship in such a way that a man leaves his family of origin to reside with his wife or his wife's family. Patrilocality structures kinship in such a way that a woman must leave her family of birth and reside with her husband or her husband's family. This observed fact has led to the assumption that the kinship shift from matriliny to patriliny must be a significant turning point in the relation of the sexes, and must be coincident with the subordination of women. But how and why did such arrangements develop? We have already discussed the scenario by which men, possibly recently risen to power due to their warfare skills, coerced unwilling women. But why were women exchanged and not men? C. D. Darlington offers one explanation. He sees exogamy as a cultural innovation, which becomes accepted because it offers an evolutionary advantage. He postulates an instinctive desire in humans to control population to "optimum density" for a given environment. Tribes achieve this by sexual control, by rituals structuring males and females into appropriate sex roles, and by resorting to abortion, infanticide, and homosexuality when necessary. According to this essentially evolutionist reasoning, population control made control over female sexuality mandatory.[23]

There are other possible explanations: supposing grown men were exchanged among tribes, what would ensure their loyalty to the tribe to which they were traded? Men's bond to their offspring was not, then, strong enough to 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 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, straddle two cultures and learn the ways of both. The knowledge they derive from this may give them access to power and certainly to influence.[24]

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.[25]

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 more 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.

The process we are now discussing occurs at different times in different parts of the world; yet it shows regularity of causes and

outcome. Approximately at the time when hunting/gathering or horticulture gives way to agriculture, kinship arrangements tend to shift from matriliny to patriliny, and private property develops. There is, as we have seen, disagreement about the sequence of events. Engels and those who follow him think that private property developed first, *causing* "the world historic overthrow of the female sex." Lévi-Strauss and Claude Meillassoux believe that it is the exchange of women through which private property is eventually created. Meillassoux offers a detailed description of the transition stage.

In hunting/gathering societies men, women, and children engage in production and consume what they produce. The social relations among them are unstable, unstructured, voluntary. There is no need for kinship structures or for structured exchanges among tribes. This conceptual model (for which it is somewhat difficult to find actual examples) gives way to a transition model, an intermediate state—horticultural society. 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 the 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 kin 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 matriliny 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.[26] 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 structuralist anthropologist continue to speak of the reification of women. The distinction is important, and we will be discussing it further. There are other questions his theory does not answer. How did elder men acquire control over agriculture? If our earlier speculations about social relations of the sexes in hunting/gathering tribes are correct, and if the generally accepted fact that it was women who developed horticulture is accurate, then one would expect it to be women who controlled the product of agricultural labor. But here other factors must enter our consideration.

Not all societies went through a horticultural stage. In many societies herding and animal husbandry alone or in conjuction with gathering activities preceded the development of agriculture. Animal husbandry was most likely developed by men. It was an occupation which led to the accumulation of surpluses in livestock, meat, or

pelts. One would expect these to be accumulated by the men who generated them. Further, plow agriculture initially demanded the strength of men, and certainly was not an occupation pregnant women or lactating mothers would have chosen, except in an auxiliary fashion. Thus, agricultural economic practice reinforced men's control over surpluses, which may also have been acquired by conquest in intertribal warfare. Another possible factor contributing to the development of private property in the hands of males may be the asymmetrical allocation of leisure time. Horticultural activities are more productive than subsistence gathering and produce leisure time. But the allocation of leisure time is uneven: men benefit more from it than women, due to the fact that the food-preparation and child-rearing activities of women continue unrelieved. Thus, men presumably could employ their new leisure time to develop craft skills, initiate rituals to enhance their power and influence and manage surpluses. I do not wish to suggest either determinism or conscious manipulation here—quite the contrary. Things developed in certain ways, which then had certain consequences which neither men nor women intended. Nor could they have had an awareness of them, any more than modern men launching the brave new world of industrialization could have had an awareness of its consequences in regard to pollution and its impact on the ecology. By the time consciousness of the process and of its consequences could develop, it was too late, at least for women, to halt the process.

The Danish anthropologist Peter Aaby points out that Meillassoux's evidence was largely based on the European model, involving the interaction of horticultural activity and animal husbandry, and on examples taken from South American lowlands Indians. Aaby cites cases, such as those of Australian hunting tribes, where the control of women exists in the absence of horticultural activity. He next cites the case of the Iroquois, a society in which women were neither reified nor dominated, as an example of horticulturists who do not turn to male dominance. He argues that under ecologically favorable conditions it would be possible to maintain demographic balance within a tribe without resorting to the importation of women. It is not only production relations but also "ecology and social-biological reproduction which are the determining or critical factors. . . ."[27] Nevertheless, since all agricultural societies have reified women's and not men's reproductive capacity, one must conclude that such systems have an advantage in regard to the expansion and appropriation of surpluses over systems based on

complementarity between the sexes. In the latter systems there are no means available for forcing producers to increase production.

Neolithic tools were relatively simple, so that anyone could make them. Land was not a scarce resource. Thus, neither tools nor land offered any opportunity for appropriation. But in a situation in which ecological conditions and irregularities in biological reproduction threatened the survival of the group, people would search for more reproducers—that is, women. The appropriation of men, such as captives (which occurs only at a later stage), would simply not fill the needs of group survival. Thus, the first appropriation of private property consists of the appropriation of the labor of women as *reproducers*.[28]

Aaby concludes:

> The connection between the reification of women on the one hand and the state and private property on the other is exactly the opposite of that posed by Engels and his followers. Without the reification of women as a historically given socio-structural feature, the origin of private property and the state will remain inexplicable.[29]

If we follow Aaby's argument, which I find persuasive, 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 their 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. My argument sharply distinguishes between biological necessity, to which both men and women submitted and adapted, and culturally constructed customs and institutions, which forced women into subordinate roles. I have tried to show how it might have come to pass that women agreed to a sexual division of labor, which would eventually disadvantage them, without having been able to foresee the later consequences.

Freud's statement, which I discussed in a different context, that for women "anatomy is destiny" is wrong because it is ahistorical and reads the distant past into the present without making allowances for changes over time. Worse, this statement has been read as a prescription for present and future: not only is anatomy destiny for women, but it *should* be. What Freud should have said is that for women anatomy *once was* destiny. That statement is accurate and historical. What once was, no longer is so, and no longer must be nor should it be so.

WITH MEILLASSOUX AND AABY we have moved from the realm of purely theoretical speculation into the consideration of evidence based on anthropological data from primitive societies in historical time. We have taken material evidence, such as ecology, climate, and demographic factors, into consideration and stressed the complex interplay of various factors which must have affected the developments we are trying to understand. There is no way we can bring hard evidence to bear on these prehistoric transitions other than by inference and comparison with what we know. As we will see, the explanatory hypothesis we have proposed can be checked against later historical evidence at various points.

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 patriliny to matriliny. The more complex societies featured a division of labor no longer based only on biological distinctions, but also on hierarchy and the power of some men over other men and all women. A number of scholars have concluded that the shift here described coincides with the formation of archaic states.[30] It is with this period then that theoretical speculation must end, and historical inquiry begin.