



# Jineoloji

A science developed around women will be the first step towards a truthfull sociology

**BASIS OF JINEOLOJİ** ▾

**FIELDS OF LIFE** ▾

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## The uprising of the oldest colony: Feminism

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*“The feminist movement certainly has to be the most radical anti-system movement. Not only the period of modernity but the whole civilisation and all of its hierarchical periods must be examined in relation to women's mental and physical enslavement. Women's freedom, equality and democracy require comprehensive theoretical work, ideological struggles, programmatic and organisational activities, and most importantly strong actions. Without this, feminism and women's work will have no other meaning than that of liberal women's activities trying to relieve the system.”*

We perceive the above points and criticisms mentioned by the Kurdish people's leader Abdullah Öcalan as relevant for all women that struggle for women's freedom. While the dominant system perceives developing women's movements as dangerous, the traps set up by the system will aim to effect women the most. These traps will not be overcome by simply criticising or theoretically analysing the system, but only by women developing a comprehensive struggle. Without overcoming these traps, women's liberation, freedom and even the guarantee of life cannot be realised.

Feminism is a significant arena of resistance in recent history. After the second half of the 20th century, feminism started to pick up but also to criticise the male discourse of modern social sciences. On the basis of the subject-object dichotomy, women have been put into the position of an object and it is a significant argument that this constitutes the source of all forms of ostracism. Feminism is the most important source of Jineoloji as it has immense experience and value in the struggle for social liberation. Of course, Jineoloji would direct its initial efforts to investigate, analyse and evaluate the enemy of women, which is the patriarchal class, civilisation and capitalist modernity. Our criticisms of feminism and existing women's movements arise from a perspective that regards

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these problems as our own, while we try to find solutions. We believe that women can advance if they exercise self-critique and reflect. Therefore, when we criticise feminism, it is with the aim to initiate a process of renewal, with a dynamic towards progress. We believe that there is an urgent need to start these discussions. Our criticisms of feminism are listed below with the awareness that feminism was created despite many hardships, developed with great struggles of women, their labour and pain.

## Fragmented Epistemology

Why did we produce so many feminist epistemologies ourselves, while positivism, capitalist modernity, liberalism and sexist sciences have divided us enough? Of course we are aware that each feminist epistemology considers problems of different domains. But we know very well that this feature alone has not been enough to enable success against the patriarchy. For this reason we must critically observe the methods of fragmentation when trying to organise ourselves.

Starting to develop Jineoloji we considered 'going beyond feminism, surpassing feminism, and to contribute to feminism', essentially to transcend its fragmented epistemology with which we did not agree. One could maybe argue that with Jineoloji we are adding to this fragmented epistemology. We will of course develop formation of knowledge about women's reality as well as the formation of methods to study women. The terminology we use (e.g. to contribute, to exceed, to enhance, etc.) are not used in a competitive sense, typically imposed on us by the male dominated system, but to enable women to understand one another, to encapsulate their experiences, and to go beyond these.

It is possible to have different women's movements and intellectual thoughts taking place in parallel, and for these groups to support one another. What matters is that we get together, to build up our collective strength to fight against the intellectual and organisational structures of the patriarchal world we live in.

## The effects of Orientalism

The assumption that the fundamental problem of Middle Eastern people, especially that of women, is that they are unable to modernise, results from an orientalist influence that disregards the moral-political dynamics of societies in the Middle East. Orientalism made it harder for us to see major obstacles that persist when trying to search for our social history. Those in the West that interpret the Middle East need to abandon and overcome this attitude. Especially Middle Eastern intellectuals, politicians, academics and feminists must take a thoughtful stance in understanding the problems and developing solutions with women's point of view, in order to enable a strong fight against the imperialist policies imposed on the Middle East. Feminism which inclines towards local cultures with originality, authenticity and an egalitarian approach, should strengthen the anti-system stance and help to understand orientalist influences and the struggles against this perspective. When feminist academics do research, it is necessary that they question the social sciences' underlying orientalist assumptions. When feminists examine the East from the West, they often do not incorporate the theories that arise in Eastern literature which constitutes a weakness of their research. theories developed in the West have progressed through social needs and contradictions, while in other geographies it is a weakness that feminism tried to fill the remaining spaces. This is why Jineoloji should be constructed in various geographical regions by progressing in different forms based upon regional and local knowledge and experiences of women in the respective area.

## Outlook on organising and socialisation

Despite the immense knowledge feminism has created, it has not sufficiently taken a role and responsibility in addressing the urgency and scope of society's need for social change and transformation. For this reason, feminist currents cannot be seen as 'alternative mainstream' in the eyes of either society or statist-power systems. They are seen rather as 'movements for hope'.

Before we go on with the critiques we must say in advance that feminism initiated the development of women's freedom from the right point. What was this first step? To decipher the anti-woman thought patterns, methods, ideological attacks that the patriarchal system created. Theoretical investigations made in this respect, have provided to be a solid basis for the struggle against the system. However, based on the results of these studies, feminism was not as effective in improving organizational performance. Different currents (radical feminism, anarcho-feminism, marxist-feminism, eco-feminism, etc.) have developed based on different points of departure of the patriarchal system and the explanations they bring to liberation from it. These differences were not limited to just the intellectual field. It has led to the fight against the patriarchal system, which organizes itself in every area of life, to fragment in different ways.

Today people worldwide are aware that political regimes have risen through state power and injustices. These powers aim to control and determine everything: law, justice, life and death. In doing so, they try to manipulate the people regarding reality and truth. It is important to organize against the system as well as analyse the system together. If one is witnessing the realities of the society they live in, and if they do not raise their voice, but only produce information about what should and should not be done, then one cannot be considered to have an anti-systemic stance. However, it is a characteristic of feminism to be an anti-system movement, and for all other anti-system oppositions, feminism is a source of motivation. Feminism is anti-militarist, anti-power, anti-sexist, anti-racist and anti-fascist. When a movement consists of so many "anti"-stances, it would be a contradictory to its character to just produce theoretical knowledge, and do less in practice. It is problematic that feminism has failed on organising itself and building up strong alliances for social change. These problems need to be thoroughly discussed within movements and rooted solutions need to be developed.

## Inability to develop an alternative life model to transcend the limits of modernity

Feminism does theoretically critique modernity, but its other weakness is the inability to practise an alternative life mode. While some feminists choose to stay out of the political arena to not 'pollute' themselves, the Kurdish women's movement's presence in the political arena proved to be effective in social transformation as much as theoretical advancement. The co-chair system in the political field has provided important experience and achievements for equal representation. Rather than talking about rejecting modernity in a closed group, the Kurdish women's movement carried this rejection to society through politics. The convincing findings of feminism expressed in the academic field did not go on to provide a strong perspective on how and which organisations and

institutions can fulfil practical needs. While refusing to use the institutional tools of the system, they gradually got stuck between academic boundaries of the system. An objective of Jineoloji is also the creation of academies. However, the academies are not constructed within the current system, they are parallel to it. They represent an educational system that women create with their own strength and resources. Although feminism has intellectually made a radical break from the system, it is problematic that it could not materialise institutionally. The autonomous organising of women guerrillas in the mountains of Kurdistan has created a model of communal life for women – not only in the mountains but also in society. Although feminism claimed there were no clear objectives on to develop women's militancy, it has not realised its utopia as it ignored the important link between freedom, organising and socialisation. As the Kurdish women's movement, we are trying to spread the principles of Jin (women), Jiyan (life), Azadi (freedom) within the whole of society. Now, in all parts of Kurdistan there are autonomous women's movements and institutions.

Among other concrete examples of Jineoloji is the construction of 'JINWAR' women's village in Rojava. It is a utopia becoming reality; it is an embodiment of life founded by women. Instead of conscious women focusing on trying to rescue themselves and separating from society, it is important to spread the consciousness of freedom within society. For this reason, Jineoloji means to strengthen the links between freedom, organising, and the society. This approach also serves to strengthen the radical democracy and freedom in legal institutions, and to strengthen women's perspectives and will within existing alternative life models.

## Approach to sexuality

In nature, all living beings' existence and continuity is ensured through nutrition, protection and reproduction. In human societies, reproduction has been identified with sexuality and unvalued labour of women. At the same time, in capitalist modernity sexuality has gone beyond the provision of reproduction for continuity of existence and has transformed into a domain of power. Women's sexuality has been controlled for the implementation and continuity of power. Instead of defining sexuality and its social meaning by disconnecting it from a position of power, it has been conserved as an area of so-called 'free choice'. Feminism has not been able to define sexuality in an ontological sense. In the development of patriarchal material and spiritual hegemony, the role of sexuality has not been solved sufficiently.

Since the 1970s, radical feminism and lesbian feminism have produced knowledge that deciphered the link between sexuality and power. These were efforts to identify with women's bodies and sexualities. Pornography was criticized as a capitalist production trafficking women. However, after 1990's, these analyses that departed from candid points overtime fell into the traps of capitalism. So instead of taking a radical stand against the system, the liberal system integrated parts of the feminist movement and their demands, while more and more feminists began to adopt patterns and practices of the system. Sexuality, initially being analysed in the feminist discourses as a problem of enslavement and domination of society, developed to be discussed as a matter of liberal freedom. 'Sexual freedom' has been handled as an individualistic matter. As a result of this, it has not been possible to develop a culture of free sexuality, which is free from dominance and slavery. Therefore we need to create a deeper understanding of sexuality, sexual identities and relationships. Should removing men and sexual partnerships physically from women's life be considered as a reactive outcome or as free choice? Are these relationships really free from dominance and slavery? Are patterns of power and domination also reproduced in gay and lesbian relationships? How can free sexuality really be achieved? What is the role of women and how is it determined? So far there are only limited answers to these questions.

## The need for the transformation of men

Feminism has not been able to systematically overcome the current sexual politics, and reproduces them in a different way. Besides sexual relationships, feminism has not presented theories concerning practical solutions on how patterns of female and male relationships could be challenged and re-established. These should concern also the question of developing new approaches of coexistence and partnerships. Critical analyses of the system and defining ideals are one important step. But we also need to consider that we live together in the reality of a patriarchal society.

In response to this, feminist politics mainly have advocated the formation of separate women-only spaces, without paying much attention to develop also policies and common platforms for gender struggle aiming at the transformation of men. This in fact contradicts with feminist criticism on the patriarchal mind-set and system. Through this approach, feminism in fact fails to be assertive and determined in making men see the need for transformation, to get them to recognise women's will, and to get them to respect women's intellect and emotions sincerely.

Feminism hasn't managed to overcome the image of a movement that mostly resists and refuses. It has not been a successful force in creating an alternative to this world in crisis. Even though comprehensive analyses have been conducted on the dominant patriarchal line of thought, the solutions proposed were mainly concerned with the enlightenment of women. Feminism has sufficiently focussed neither on perspectives for the transformation of men, on the acknowledgment of the links between freedom and gender, nor on a way of organising that promotes social freedom.

## Approach to History

The prevailing way of history writing has contributed strongly to the construction and maintenance of sexism. One of the fundamental feminist criticism concerning modern social sciences is that history has been written with an androcentric view. History as correctly illustrated by the pun 'his story', has systematically ignored 'her story', the truth and history of women. This is why feminism gives no credence to written history and the androcentric viewpoint. However, as women's history has not been sufficiently disclosed, we cannot expect the eradication of the androcentric mind-set that wrote history without an effort to change the patriarchal mind set. Social sciences are also not exempt from this. The longest period of history, that of women-centred societies is yet still to be revealed. Jineoloji does not just aim to include women in the writing of history, but to actually write HERSTORY, the history of women.

It would be unfair to consider and view women's values historically through the prism of feminism only. In certain regions around the world, predominantly the Western world, feminist movements have played a leading role in resisting against patriarchy. However, the world has many different cultures and traditions.

For thousands of years women around the world have reviewed and interpreted their role within society. There are archaeological findings that suggest women in certain locations have taken leading roles within society at certain times in history. We think that it is important for feminism to take these historical findings into consideration when progressing as a movement. In this regard Jineoloji, also endeavours to make meaningful contribution to writing of HERSTORY, the history of women.

Today, women's local experiences are highly varied in every country. How fair can it be to present their experiences through the prisms of Post-colonial Feminism, Kurdish Feminism or Islamic Feminism? How much do these currents represent the struggles developed by the women in different regions of the world? We think feminism should ask these questions, because many women who have conducted a struggle against patriarchy cannot identify themselves in these categories. In this regard, not recognising the experiences and the progress made by these women, not placing the names of their organisations in the feminist literature is an important issue that needs to be recognised and addressed by feminist movements.

We believe that all women's movements who have represented values of society and resisted within and against the patriarchal civilisation of nation-states as well as women resisting within the axis of democratic civilisation, should get together to create a women's paradigm. For this reason, we think the recognition of the struggles conducted by women in all parts of the world and their efforts to record their experiences as voiced by themselves in literature, are some of the most important contributions to the women's freedom struggles around the world.

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