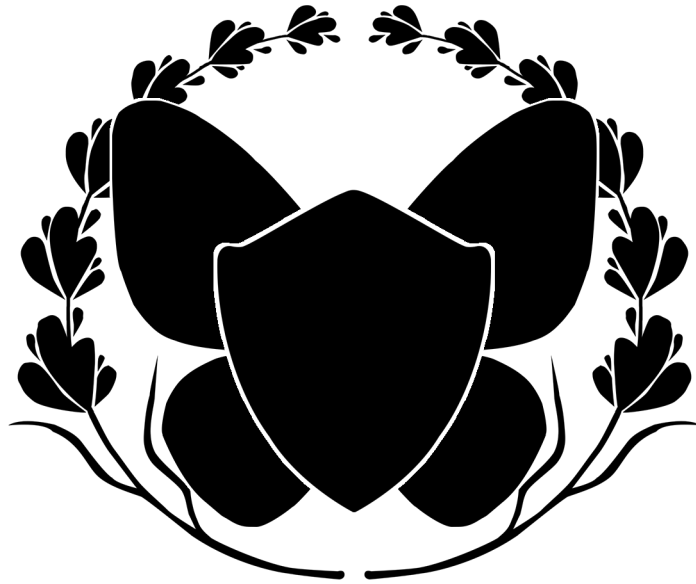


# FEUERBACHIAN MATERIALISM AND GENDER-CRITICISM:

*A Marxist Polemic Against “Scientific” Transmisogyny*



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*“The followers of historical materialism reject the existence of a special woman question separate from the general social question of our day. Specific economic factors were behind the subordination of women; natural qualities have been a secondary factor in this process. Only the complete disappearance of these factors, only the evolution of those forces which at some point in the past gave rise to the subjection of women, is able in a fundamental way to influence and change their social position. In other words, women can become truly free and equal only in a world organised along new social and productive lines.”*

- [Alexandra Kollontai](#), 1909

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# Introduction

The trans question has reached special importance in the popular struggle in America — and the West more broadly — since actions are intensifying which tend to mobilize transsexuals and their “queer” allies. An analysis of this particular struggle from a historical materialist viewpoint will be necessary for mobilizing the trans masses on the basis of a proletarian line — in service to the Communist revolution — and for developing solidarity for their struggle on the basis of class solidarity. Unfortunately a new camp of Marxist distorters, uncritically inheriting the anti-LGBT opportunism, philistinism, and chauvinism of our predecessors, have joined the ranks of the “[Neo-Moneyists](#),” that is, those who abuse materialism in service to transmisogyny. In grand refutation of these distorters, some self-professed Communist parties have only managed to tokenize transsexuals, to lend support to the queer struggle with the same beleaguered “authenticity” as the Democratic party. Neither of these groups have dedicated time to understanding the trans question with the scientific rigor that Marxism demands, so we shall have to do it ourselves.

Since the restoration of capitalism in the former Communist bloc, and the defeat of the domestic Communist movement to COINTELPRO, the ideological sway of Marxism has been buried beneath decades of bourgeois ideology. Part of this ideological crepitus has eroded the mainstream ‘queer rights’ movement — with its emphasis on bourgeois equality, social reform, and postmodernism — and part of this bourgeois corrosion is characteristic of our opposition, the so-called “Gender Critical” movement (aka TERFism, or “trans exclusionary radical feminists”), who find their allies amongst the most advanced of fascists and the most backwards of “Communists.” These most noble proponents of gender criticism have deputized themselves as the sole defenders of “material reality,” attempting, as the Scientific Racists before them did, to provide purportedly scientific, rational, and materialist justifications for their chauvinistic ideology. It should come as little surprise, then, that many of our trans brothers and sisters all but reject materialism; it must appear to them that the most vocal proponents of materialism are calling for their continued — *if not intensified* — oppression.

Reorienting the trans liberation struggle on a revolutionary, materialist basis requires us to rectify this situation, to make quite clear the distinction between Marxist materialism and the vulgar materialism espoused by our enemies. This materialism, formulated by the 19th century German philosopher Ludwig Feuerbach, is a special kind of mechanical (metaphysical) materialism, which Marx famously criticized in the various works that comprise *The German Ideology*. In their unwitting return to this pre-Marxist, Feuerbachian materialism, our transmisogynistic “comrades” believe they are making Marxism anti-trans. Some of our queer brothers and sisters have internalized this view. But what they are really doing is depriving Marx’s materialism of its dialectical basis, and thereby distorting and vulgarizing it with the very metaphysics that Marx overcame. We can recognize the vulgarity of their materialism by the following key characteristics: the way in which it espouses “immutability” as a natural law, the way in which it presents man not as he really is within his social connections, but as an ahistorical abstraction, and in its crude empiricist denial of social relations as objective, material forces.

The metaphysical worldview holds that things only ever change mechanically, that they only ever change in quantity, position, or magnitude, and that the basis of this change is external. This comes in contradistinction to dialectical materialism, which recognizes that an object cannot be removed from its environment without thereby altering it, that qualitative change is not only possible but a fundamental property of all matter-in-motion, and that the basis of this change is the presence of contradictory elements *internal* to the object (or system) itself. To understand any 'thing' is therefore to study its development and its relationship to other things, and not as an isolated, eternal form. Without any way to comprehend historical or sociological development, or any way to differentiate form from essence, our modern day (Pseudo)Scientific Transmisogynists struggle to differentiate *Gender* from the *Idea of Gender*. They do not oppose or critique the former, they only oppose the latter, the *idea* that gender objectively exists, that it is not merely a collective (or personal) delusion. In point of fact, they implicitly defend gender and patriarchal society by insisting that patriarchy is simply the natural order of the world.

This polemic diverges in several ways from what might commonly be called "queer theory." In our view, postmodern academics share some of the blame for the weakening of the trans and queer liberation movements and for the beguiling of the trans and queer masses. The weakness of postmodern theory has not only destroyed all strategic understanding of fighting for our emancipation, but it has also facilitated the ease with which fascist movements and demagogues have been able to utilize anti-LGBT chauvinism as one of their key pieces of agitation. And contrary to the beliefs of a certain [kermit-like demagogue](#), postmodernism and Marxism are ideologically antithetical. Therefore, we revolutionary transsexuals must insist upon rejecting postmodernism as a product of bourgeois academia *because it offers no concrete foundation on which to analyze our condition, let alone on which to fight for our liberation*. Let us be completely unambiguous here: trans women *are* women, and trans men *are* men, but postmodernism can not explain *why*, it can only beg the question (accept the conclusion as a premise). As we revive the revolutionary movement for trans liberation, we must not only return to materialism, but *dialectical* materialism specifically. And in-so-doing, we will not only overcome the liberal ideologues who have led us astray, but we will also take back ground seized by the transmisogynist's hypocritical claim to 'material reality.'

# Sexual Metaphysics

## — Immutability —

Herein lies the most conspicuously metaphysical idea of the anti-trans chauvinists: that sex is determined at conception and that it can never be altered. Where else in nature can you think of something which is not capable of undergoing change? Where else in nature is immutability present? Quantum particles “blip” into and out of existence. Elements decay to radiation and fuse together in stars, forming new elements. Molecules react with each other to form qualitatively different chemicals. Species evolve over generations to form new species, and every cell in one’s body is constantly being regenerated and replaced by new ones. The very fabric of space itself expands! If the universe has a beginning and an end, then perhaps even the most fundamental natural laws can not truly be understood as “immutable” (some [current theories](#) even predict that the four ‘fundamental’ forces of nature were not present as such at the beginning of the big bang!). Immutability is simply not a characteristic present in nature; from the smallest scale to the largest we only find varying degrees of stability and instability. It is a metaphysical abstraction, a bourgeois delusion, to conceive of things that are isolated and unchangeable. It is, in other words, precisely bourgeois ideology which denies the internal processes of change or the possibility of transformation of one thing into its opposite. This should be obvious to our self-professed students of the Marxist dialectic, and so one is forced to ponder if their negligence on this matter is, generously, merely naive, or, perhaps, more ill-intentioned.

A more concrete example will help illustrate this point. Surely we must agree that humans, as a group, are bipedal (have two legs), but that individual members may deviate from this generalization. Someone could be born with more or fewer legs than two. Someone could lose a leg later in life, or, perhaps, through some arcane process, they might even have more legs added (we support a tripod king). But we must surely agree on two things: that a one-legged person does not cease to be human, and that a one or three-legged biped is a contradiction. And yet, if we apply the logic of biological metaphysics to leggedness, then it’s perfectly reasonable to refer to someone born with three legs, or someone who has lost one or more of their legs, as a biped. You were born a biped, of a bipedal race, and classified a biped at birth, therefore you will always be a biped — YWNBAT (you will never be a tripod). Mechanical materialism can not understand a change in quality because it is unable to comprehend a discontinuity in identity ( $A \neq A$ ); instead it must resign itself to denying qualitative change. The absurdity of a one or three-legged biped is obvious, but it is precisely this kind of denial of reality that goes into denying a change of sex through medical transition.

No, sex is not immutable, it is decidedly quite plastic — and this is the very basis for medical transition. If you’ll indulge the jargon: the unity of opposites represented by the dialectical transformation of one sex organ into another betrays this very fact — how can we say that sex is immutable when the process of their differentiation is, in point of fact, a transformation from one sex to another? To say that sex can’t be changed is to *ignore the very real fact that it can change and that it does change!* Looking outside the human case, there are species of frogs, birds, and fish which

can even completely change their primary sexual organs throughout their lives. Of course the Neo-Moneyist might accurately accuse us of biological equivocation by suggesting that spontaneous sex differentiation in fish reflects something about sex in humans — and this is so only so long as we emphasize the *spontaneous* or ‘*organic*’ element of that process. That is to say, through science and medicine — through the fruits of human ingenuity — we are seeing the gap between the human sexes being bridged with increasing ease and flexibility.

As science and medicine continues to build this bridge, the anti-trans chauvinists have been left scrambling to tear it down. They must retreat, like cornered rats, into an ever shrinking definition of what sex even means; this definition must keep retracting so as to keep the trans- and inter-sexuals excluded from it. Today, medical science has conquered hormonal and secondary sex characteristics, and, increasingly, it has been able to conquer primary characteristics too. Thus our Neo-Moneyists have developed a *new definition of sex* (and it is, despite what they will no doubt insist, a *new* way of defining sex) which singles out gamete size as the singular, truly determining factor (this is their “basic biology”? who can recall learning about “gamete size” in their highschool biology class?). Apparently we are expected to believe that the only universal and shared characteristic of the female sex is the production of a gamete of a particular size. But would we transsexuals be accepted as our gender if only we were able to produce a gamete of the appropriate size? Or, interpreted generously, if we were otherwise fully fertile and able to reproduce as our self-identified sex would normally? *Obviously not!* The premise of this definition is merely the expectation that it prohibits the possibility of encompassing a transsexual. If a trans woman were implanted with ovaries or a trans man with testicles, they would only retreat even further into denial, rejecting the evidence before their eyes of the fluidity of sex. No physiological alteration, no matter how comprehensive, will ever be enough to satisfy the anti-trans chauvinist. And why is that? Because medical intervention is “unnatural.” It simply “wouldn’t count.”

## — Simulation —

The argument for the invalidity of artificial or synthetic alteration is often predicated on one idea: *simulation*. “You didn’t *really* change your sex, it only *appears so!*” And on what basis is this appeal to simulation made? By the fact that sex is immutable, and that therefore it can not change, and that therefore any perceived change must be illusory. This false, circular logic is exposed when we investigate the process of simulation and compare it to the process of medical transition. In the first place, simulation implies that there is a distinct *internal* process that (merely) mimics an external behavior. In (very loose)<sup>1</sup> mathematical terms, we can say that ‘f’ simulates ‘g’ if, for all x,  $f(x) = g(x)$  and  $f \neq g$ . There is a famous ‘Chinese room’ thought experiment which will provide a clearer example:

Suppose that there is a man *who does not speak Chinese* sealed in a room. The room has a hole on one side through which a sheet of paper can be input — a message in Chinese that requires a response in Chinese — and another hole on the other

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<sup>1</sup> Loose because, in mathematics, these coextensive functions ‘f’ and ‘g’ would necessarily be equivalent. Outside formal logic, however, we can indeed find phenomena which do not expose their inner essence by their form. An actor can simulate emotions, a speaker can simulate a recorded instrument, hallucinations simulate stimuli, etc.

side through which the response is to be output. Finally, there is a codebook that relays the steps of how to respond to any given input stroke-by-stroke. Through this codebook, *the man is able to fool the outside world into thinking there's a native Chinese speaker in the room, when there really isn't!*

This is a simulation because it replicates the inputs and outputs of a native Chinese speaker in absence of actual comprehension. The sexual metaphysicist, thus, must believe that artificial hormones are analogous to the Chinese room, merely simulating the appearance of the development of secondary sex characteristics. Does this accurately reflect how hormone replacement therapy (HRT) produces secondary sex characteristics? In fact it does not: Crucially, *it is not the hormones themselves which provide the transformation*. Every human body already contains — internally — the means to produce these transformations, the hormones only act as a “switch.” In other words, every human body contains within it the same “codebook” for producing secondary sex characteristics, so hormones must act as the *input* to the system. The significance of this distinction is brought to the fore in Mao’s famous egg metaphor:

“Does materialist dialectics exclude external causes? Not at all. It holds that external causes are the condition of change and internal causes are the basis of change, and that external causes become operative through internal causes. In a suitable temperature an egg changes into a chicken, but no temperature can change a stone into a chicken” ([On Contradiction](#)).

Mao suggests that the heat which *enables* the egg to turn into a chicken does not, strictly speaking, *cause* the egg to do so; the ability to transform from egg to chicken is internal to the egg. You know this must be true because the same heat will not transform a rock into a chicken; the ‘chickenification’ mechanism does not belong to the heat. In this regard, cross-sex hormones are analogous to the heat: the hormones do not *cause* secondary-sex characteristic developments, they *enable* these developments; the same hormones which “cause” a human to grow facial hair will not cause a rock to grow facial hair. And so, how can it be said that, for instance, the development of breasts in a trans woman is merely simulation when the mechanism of its development is internal and innate to her? In what possible sense is this mechanism distinct from how a cis woman would grow breasts? Any child can clearly see that they are but two eggs receiving heat from different sources!

Looking at it more closely, it becomes clear that the insistence upon simulation is not born out a stringently materialist analysis of phenomena and their essence, but upon an ideological need to maintain this notion of immutability. The ‘inorganic’ character of medical transition does not betray some universal law of unchanging nature, but only reflects humanity’s unique characteristic as masters over the production of their own conditions. To continue insisting on simulation on the basis of immutability should be understood as nothing less than a refutation of Marxism.

### — Three Legged Bipeds —

Let us return for a moment to our friend, the three-legged biped. I said that humans as a



kind are bipedal, but showed that individual humans may not be. This kind of statement is called a characterizing generic: a statement that expresses an accepted generalization about *individuals of a kind*, but does not express a *universally true characteristic of the kind itself*. A generic statement such as “tigers have stripes” is certainly true, but one would be a fine biologist indeed who assumes that this means no exceptions are to be found. An albino tiger has no stripes, and yet it remains a tiger all the same. What this statement really implies is that under the most routine circumstances, tigers will tend to develop stripes. Similarly, I argue that it is accurate to say that humans are sexually dimorphic, that they fall into one of two sexes, but that this is not the same as saying that only two sexes exist; some people do not fall strictly into one of the two “main” sexes.

Today, these individuals are called intersexuals — people with “intermediate” or “indeterminate” sexual characteristics. Normatively, these people are said to have “mismatched” or “disordered” sets of sexual characteristics, such as someone with XY chromosomes and a womb. This occurs because sex is a complex characteristic, composed of several overlapping but independent characteristics (primary sex organs, secondary sex organs, hormones, and chromosomes), and because it develops in stages, and not all at once. The sex differentiation process begins with homologous structures being converted from one organ to another: The labial tissue becomes a scrotum, the clitoral tissue becomes the head of the penis, and so on and so forth. This is a dialectical process: one organ becomes another, at first through gradual, quantitative changes, and culminating in one, final qualitative change. Under typical circumstances of development, these stages will tend to follow a particular pattern, but only so long as those circumstances also remain stable. Hence, it is another failure of bourgeois ideology to make a singular abstraction, sex, out of these various stages of development, as though a zygote has the same “sex” as a newborn, and a newborn the same “sex” as a sexually mature adult. Each of these stages brings about new characteristics; one is assigned<sup>2</sup> a sex from birth, but there’s a matter of uncertainty whether one will grow up to really embody that sex. Analogously, we’d be poor physicists to proclaim steam and water the same form of matter simply because they share the same molecular structure, or to assume that water that is in the process of heating will always result in a transformation into steam. Yes, water boils at 100 degrees Celsius. But does it always, *necessarily* do so? Negative: The boiling point of water only appears fixed under the force of habit of living under 1 atmosphere of pressure. The boiling point is not “immutable,” only stable under the usual conditions of life. And just as water has a range of intermediate temperatures between water and steam, so too does sex come in a range of intermediate, quantitatively distinct characters.

But the anti-intersexual chauvinist will deny this: they claim that, rather than being a distinct sex, these people are “merely disordered.” Once again, it simply “doesn’t count.” The argument here, however, is not one of simulation, but of teleology (or, in certain cases, theology). The human body is “designed”<sup>3</sup> to be sexually dimorphic for the purpose of reproduction. Therefore, any characteristic that disrupts the *function or purpose* of fertility can be discounted as a disorder. Sexual dimorphism

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2 The Neo-Moneyist claims that sex is merely observed, rather than assigned. But how can we call this process truly impartial, when doctors are compelled to surgically intervene on those with indeterminate sexual characteristics? Is this not assigning them a sex other than what they were born as?

3 Sometimes you will find “organized” substituted for “designed,” as if that doesn’t equally imply an intelligent “organizer.”

is not merely a characterizing generic, but a universally true characteristic of the human kind, and individual exceptions are just that — exceptions. Outliers. Of course, we are left to wonder: *designed by whom or by what?* And how can a characteristic be universal if it has exceptions? This “logic” extends farther than the intersexual question. For example, the Neo-Moneyist will claim that production of gametes singularly determines sex; when confronted with an infertile woman, they will inevitably rebuke that her body is “*designed*” to produce such a gamete, even though, in reality, it can’t and it doesn’t. What kind of materialism is this that judges reality by its deviation from an abstraction? It is a kind of materialism that assumes the existence of a universal plan or blueprint, *an ideal with its own independent existence*, by which any ‘thing’ abides or deviates. Whether God’s divine plan or Plato’s eternal forms, this is *the* foundation of metaphysics.

# Human Nature: Eternal or Historical?

*“The cult of abstract man, which formed the kernel of Feuerbach’s new religion, had to be replaced by the science of real men and of their historical development.”*

- [Engels](#), 1886

## — The Cult Of Abstract Man —

The Neo-Moneyists also share with Feuerbach a conception of human nature as fundamental, innate, and inherited from the very beginning of humanity’s natural history. This philosophy of nature is shared by all the bourgeois and reactionary ideologues of both today and yesteryear, because it places the blame of social institutions, which are changeable, onto human nature, which is said to be immutable. Without immediately addressing the “innateness” of nature, this conception is flawed because any animal’s nature is environmentally dependent rather than universal. For example, the difference in behavior between captive and wild wolves is now known to differ so substantially that research about wolf packs being hierarchically led by “alphas” has become [obsolete](#). The same kind of contextual nature can be seen in captive humans (inmates), who likewise behave in more competitive and violent ways than they would otherwise. Not so dissimilarly, competition between impoverished people is sometimes likened to “crabs in a barrel,” and yet any one can clearly see that those crabs wouldn’t drag each other down if only they hadn’t been stuffed together in a barrel. To change one’s interrelation with their surroundings is, fundamentally, to change their own being as well.

But while this is sufficient as a criticism of universal nature, a particularly exasperating and exhaustive interlocutor might still argue that every animal contains a multitude of natures, depending on their environment, but otherwise eternal and unchanging. Fine. For our imaginary pedant we shall have to shed light on one of the most profound differences between humans and other animals: that we alter our own environments.<sup>4</sup> The conditions under which humanity evolved as a species are no longer the conditions under which we live in today, which Feuerbach neglected long ago by considering man and nature as essentially two different, isolated things. The most relevant criticism of Feuerbach by Marx is found within [Theses on Feuerbach](#):

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4 While it is true that certain other animals change their environments (spiders, bees, beavers, etc), the manner in which these changes occur do not accumulate and build on themselves. A bee born into a hive will not then develop a *new kind of hive* (let alone overthrow their queen), a bird that grows up in a nest won’t develop a *new kind of nest*, the beaver of yesterday, today, and tomorrow will continue to build the same shoddy dam over and over. Humans, because we record and pass on knowledge, because we have a developed history, are able to stand on the shoulders of giants in a way that other animals simply can’t. And while other animals are subject to changing conditions *imposed by humans*, no other known animal has developed into historical beings who independently alter *their own* conditions in a recursive, reflective, self-changing way.

“Feuerbach resolves the religious essence into the human essence. But the human essence is no abstraction inherent in each single individual.

In its reality it is the ensemble of the social relations.

Feuerbach, who does not enter upon a criticism of this real essence, is consequently compelled:

1. To abstract from the historical process and to fix the religious sentiment as something by itself and to presuppose an abstract – isolated – human individual.
2. Essence, therefore, can be comprehended only as “genus”, as an internal, dumb generality which naturally unites the many individuals.”

Marx further elaborates in *The German Ideology*:

“[Feuerbach] does not see how the sensuous world around him is, not a thing given direct from all eternity, remaining ever the same, but the product of industry and of the state of society... because he still remains in the realm of theory and conceives of men not in their given social connection, not under their existing conditions of life, which have made them *what* they are, he never arrives at the really existing active men, but stops at the abstraction ‘man.’”

Feuerbach and his ideological progeny — some of whom even profess to be students of dialectics — do not understand the mutual interrelation between man, who conditions his own environment, and the natural world, which, in turn, conditions the nature of man. Because we adapt our environments to our needs, rather than adapting our physiology to the environment, we have effectively escaped the cycle of natural selection; nevertheless, this changing environment still does exert an influence on our *consciousness*. Human nature, then, is a historical product, just as the structure and development of society itself is. Some instincts, of course, are still inherited from our natural history. But for adherents to Feuerbach’s cult of abstract man, natural instincts are the *only* kind of consciousness that mankind has.

Similar fundamental criticisms arise in many of Marx’s other polemics. [Mr Proudhon](#) does not understand that economic categories only represent truths within a certain narrow frame of historical development, within particular modes of production, that the laws of economics, unlike natural laws, change and develop with society. Lassalle’s “iron law of wages” similarly presumes that Malthus’s law of population is an eternal, natural law. And if this is so, then, Marx tells us:

“If this theory [of Malthus’s] is correct, then again I cannot abolish the law [of wages] even if I abolish wage labor a hundred times over, **because the law then governs not only the system of wage labor but every social system**. Basing themselves directly on this, the economists have been proving for 50 years and more that socialism cannot abolish poverty, which has its basis in nature, but can only make it *general*,

distribute it simultaneously over the whole surface of society!” ([Critique of the Gotha Programme](#), emphasis added).

Hence the political significance of the inherent vs historical nature debate: The ruling intelligentsia would have us believe that capitalism is an inevitable product of an unchanging nature, and that therefore there is no possible alternative. Socialism “goes against human nature,” so, they claim with feigned melancholy, there’s simply nothing that can be done about poverty and inequality.

You’ll find the ultimate expression of this idea in the Nazi’s conception of “social darwinism,” which espouses that whatever inequality exists in society is not only a direct product of nature, of competition between people with superior and inferior genetic traits, but that it’s *good* for it be so, because it rewards the “good genes” while punishing the “dysgenic.” The discontinuity between natural and social history is completely paved over so that structural critique becomes superfluous. Whoever has power has it because of their superior biology (strength, intellect, etc); whoever is poor, or sick, or disabled, is simply weak, or dull, and subsequently their genetic material, which is presumed to carry these traits, harms the entire race, the Volk, and should be purged from society. The kernel of this genocidal ideology can also be found in the work of Feuerbach:

“[Feuerbach] develops the view that **the existence of a thing or a man is at the same time its or his essence**, that the conditions of existence, the mode of life and activity of an animal or human individual are those in which its ‘essence’ feels itself satisfied. Here **every exception is expressly conceived as an unhappy chance**, as an abnormality which cannot be altered. Thus if millions of proletarians feel by no means contented with their living conditions, if their ‘existence’ does not in the least correspond to their ‘essence,’ then, according to the passage quoted, **this is an unavoidable misfortune, which must be borne quietly**” (The German Ideology, emphasis added).

Power justifies power and oppression justifies oppression; the way that things are, are they way that they are meant to be. Woe to those with poor essence!

Any revolutionary worth their salt would clearly see this view of nature as a reactionary canard. Any revolutionary worth their salt would zealously scramble to prove the very antithesis of this idea: that neither the laws of economics nor human nature are eternally encoded within the DNA we inherited from evolution (or by God, Providence, etc), but are products of *unfinished* historical development. That the existing society is not all there ever was or will be, and that *a better world is possible!* And yet...

## — Zoological VS Economic Materialism —

The comparison to Nazism is neither an arbitrary insult nor a superficial observation. It was, after all, the Nazis who sought to swindle the masses under the guise of demagoguery, and who brought zoological materialism to its highest pitch. Zoological materialism, in contradistinction to

Marxist (“economic”) materialism, has no interest in changing the world, only in explaining (and *justifying*) it by reference to biology. For the Nazis, this was race essentialism. In the “enlightened” worldview of the Neo-Moneyists, it is sexual essentialism: the antagonistic contradiction between the sexes is fundamental to our very nature, as if the patriarchy were encoded directly on the Y chromosome, that despicable piece of genetic material responsible for all the world’s evils. The Y chromosome is to blame. That is the precise explanation expounded to us by the proponents of gender criticism. And whoever does not believe in gender criticism is not a materialist. The role of society, of social relations? Their importance in determining the development of history? But what can these “merely sociological” phenomena do against such a decisive factor as “basic biology”? We are supposed to believe that the patriarchy of today, which is also the patriarchy of yesterday and tomorrow, is nothing more than the ultimate expression of how humans are biologically predetermined to behave. Men are strong, fast, and predatory; women are weak, dumb, and vulnerable. What goes unsaid is the implication that the way in which society is structured is therefore the only way that things *can be* structured. After all, how can we speak of abolishing the gendered division of labor if the law that governs this division is the essential nature of woman? If nature or Providence has decided on her role in society?

Our backwards “Communists” can begin to reeducate themselves by re-reading Engel’s analysis of patriarchy in *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, which argues that the first civilizations were not immediately divided into classes. After all, in a society where the labor of every individual is required for the collective to survive, and where, at the same time, no single individual can survive on their own, where, in other words, there are *no surplus products to distribute*, it is impossible for one to exploit the labor of the other. Hence, the first civilizations could not have been divided into classes, and nor could men have exploited women. But when the forces of production became developed enough to produce a surplus, those who held a monopoly over weapons due to their position in the existing division of labor — men — found themselves, for the first time, in a position to exploit others through the use of force. Classes, slavery, and patriarchy, thus, developed, not from the outset of society, but only later after a particular stage of development in the means of production. As men became the first dominant class in history, they forced women to remain monogamous within the new patrilineal family so that their male progeny could inherit their newfound wealth, which could thereby continue to accumulate over generations. And many other developments followed, like the restriction of homosexuality and transvestic expression, the prohibition against Goddess worship and pagan rituals, the replacement of these ancient religions and popular cults by centralized and male-dominated theologies, the diminution of female status, etc. It’s worth quoting in full here:

“Monogamous marriage comes on the scene as the subjugation of the one sex by the other; it announces a struggle between the sexes unknown throughout the whole previous prehistoric period. In an old unpublished manuscript, written by Marx and myself in 1846, I find the words: ‘The first division of labor is that between man and woman for the propagation of children.’ And today I can add: The first class opposition that appears in history coincides with the development of the antagonism between man and woman in monogamous marriage.”

Of course, neither Marx nor Engels ever wrote anything about gender explicitly. Nevertheless, it's in this passage we can identify what can be said to be the historical basis for gender; not simply the existence and *observation* of sex, but the *reproductive division of labor*, which was, at the same time, the very first division of labor in general. It is “common sense” to our Neo-Moneyists that there are only two sexes, not because they clearly observe as much, but because they experience the binary division of labor in our society, which is further conditioned by a pre-established binarist ideology which naturalizes the current state of affairs.

To say that there are only two *genders* is technically not wrong: our society does in fact only have two socially recognized genders, only two ways to be socialized, to fit into the division of labor. But to acknowledge this is not to say that only two genders are possible — as is contested by people identifying as genders other than how they were socialized — only that our contemporary society, *in contradistinction to ancient societies*, offers no way to engage with society *as a non-binary gender* except as an individual expression of identity. With the wealth of anthropological data that has been collected in the 150-ish years since Engels's death, we now know that the ancient division of labor was not strictly, not always, a *binary* division. Consider, for example, the third gender of ancient Hawai'i and Tahiti: *Māhū*. The first written observation of the *Māhū* was recorded in 1793 by James Morrison, a British seaman and mutineer who landed in Tahiti:

“In addition to the classes which we have already described, a class of men is called *Mahu*. They are men in a way like the eunuchs of India, however without having been castrated. They do not live with a woman, but their life resembles that of a woman with clothing and shaved hair, dancing and singing and an effeminate voice. They are generally experts in the art of doing the work of women of the time: painting, blankets and sheets.” ([The RaeRae and Mahu: third Polynesian sex](#), 2016)

These *Māhū* were not exceptional in the ancient world. It is widely recognized today that before contact with colonizers, many Native American tribes also had third genders, now collectively referred to with the neologism “two-spirit.” Before this term was adopted, “berdache” was used by the colonizers to refer primarily to men who acted as women. One account was published in 1902 by the anthropologist Alfred L. Kroeber:

“Berdaches (men living as women) were found among the Arapaho, as among the Cheyenne, Sioux, Omaha, Ute, and many other tribes. They are called *haxu'xan*, which is thought to mean ‘rotten bone.’ The following accounts concerning them were obtained... These people had the natural desire to become women, and as they grew up gradually became women. They gave up the desires of men. They were married to men. They had miraculous power and could do (supernatural) things. For instance, it was one of them that first made an intoxicant from rain-water.” ([The Arapaho](#), 1902).

The following paragraph, presumably due to its sexual content, appears in the text in Latin:

“Among the Indians called Cheyenne, there lived a woman who had the voice and genitals of a man. She used women’s clothes, and lived with women as a woman... Having asked the man who was bound [sic?], he gave his consent; reclining on his back and putting down his belly, he allowed access to the anus.” (*Ibid*).

A presentation by the [National Congress of American Indians](#) (NCAI) from 2012 provides a more comprehensive listing of particular tribal identities and names. It also includes a section about the unique roles of two-spirit persons, but does not distinguish by tribe:

- Mediators
- Social Workers
- Name Giving
- Love Potions / Match Maker
- Sun Dance
- Holy people, told the future and brought good luck
- Boy’s & Girl’s Puberty Ceremony
- Peace-Makers for the Tribe
- Joined war parties
- Doctors/medicine people

Across the ancient world you will find other third (or more) genders, some of whom held particular spiritual, cultural, or political duties, others of whom were expected to assist in the social rearing of children, domestic labor, or taking care of the elderly. These genders may not have been directly or immediately necessary for reproduction, but were typically considered *indirectly* vital for it.

Returning to the crux of the debate, we should understand that patriarchy is not a primeval scourge, but a social system that developed over time, and that, therefore, further developments *can* and *will* engender a subsequent destruction of this inherited patriarchal system. Perhaps our regressive “Communists” can not see it, but when the proponents of gender criticism espouse zoological materialism it is, consciously or otherwise, a refutation of the possibility of social change. Further still, it is an exercise in historical revisionism, since established history already demonstrates that changes to the gender system have occurred before, and that the sexual binary was not transmitted to the modern day from our natural history, but from a later period.



# Gender: A Real Abstraction

## — What is a Social Relation Anyway? —

The final similarity between Feuerbachian and Neo-Moneyist materialism is its failure to comprehend social relations. If you've ever heard someone say "money isn't real, it only has value because we all agree that it has value" or "borders aren't real, it's just an arbitrary barrier that the state defends by force," then you are familiar with the problem. This is the classic idealist conception of social relations: these are concepts which find their origin in men's minds in the first instance, and are merely acted upon in reality because of this false consciousness. The social practice is only a reflection of some idea, like a collective delusion, and if only we could all acknowledge it, if only we could all alter our consciousness, then the all-mighty dollar would cease to have value. This view is precisely backwards. On the contrary, it is humanity's sensuous activity that creates social relations, which are only in the second instance reflected in the mind as abstractions; the social relation exists *whether we consciously acknowledge it or not*. That is to say, money does not have value because we believe that it does, but, on the contrary, we believe money has value because it *really does* — and it really does have value because the dominant form of intercourse compels us to exchange the dollar for other commodities. Likewise, it is precisely the act of defending a border that makes it real. The social relation has an *objective* existence independent from, and prior to, the consciousness of those who participate in it. Indeed, the idea that the action precedes consciousness is an essential 'tenet' of Marx's historical materialism, which he famously expressed in the [preface](#) to the Critique of Political Economy: "It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness."

When we dig a little bit deeper, we find that one of the greatest insights of Marx, which is even occasionally missed by learned Marxists, is that even though value is not in itself a material (or 'natural') property — that is to say, it can not be mechanically separated out from a commodity, as if it were an independent substance composed of 'value particles' — it is at the same time *physically embodied* whenever something serves as the equivalent form of value in the process of exchange. It's worth quoting the relevant passages from Capital in full:

"If we say that, as values, commodities are mere congelations of human labour, we reduce them by our analysis, it is true, to the abstraction, value; **but we ascribe to this value no form apart from their bodily form...** The first peculiarity that strikes us, in considering the form of the equivalent, is this: **use value becomes the form of manifestation, the phenomenal form of its opposite, value. The bodily form of the commodity becomes its value form.** But, mark well, that this quid pro quo exists in the case of any commodity B, only when some other commodity A enters into a value relation with it." (Capital vol. 1, Chapter 1, emphasis added)

What is this sort of property that can only manifest within a social relation, that is not a natural property, but is nevertheless an objective property that must be physically embodied? Marxist

theorist Alfred Sohn-Rethel lent additional clarity to this concept by coining what he called *real abstraction*: an abstraction not of thought, *but of action*. As he elaborates in [Intellectual And Manual Labour: A Critique Of Epistemology](#): “While the concepts of natural science are thought abstractions, the economic concept of value is a real one. **It exists nowhere other than in the human mind but it does not spring from it**. Rather it is purely social in character, arising in the spatio-temporal sphere of human interrelations” (emphasis added).

Failure to understand the objectivity of these real abstractions inevitably leads one back into idealism. This is exactly why Marx criticized Feuerbach for being an inconsistent materialist who “relapses in idealism” whenever he attempts to grapple with history. Summarizing the reason that Feuerbach is unable to completely withdraw from idealism, Marx says:

“The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism – that of Feuerbach included – is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the *object or of contemplation*, but not as *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively. Hence, in contradistinction to materialism, the *active* side was developed abstractly by idealism – which, of course, does not know real, sensuous activity as such. Feuerbach wants sensuous objects, really distinct from the thought objects, **but he does not conceive human activity itself as objective activity**” ([Theses on Feuerbach](#), emphasis added).

In refutation of the Hegelian idealists, Feuerbach rejects the primacy of thought over the material, and yet, like the Hegelian idealists, Feuerbach can't help but view ideas as being spontaneously generated from the aether, independent from the actual conditions of life. As Marx says, he fails to reconcile materialism with history, because he cannot grasp the objective existence of social relations (human activity) — and he is thereby compelled to confine himself to contemplation over action. In other words: in this view, social change can only be a product of contemplation and criticism, of changing people's minds. But if we understand that one's social being determines their consciousness, that belief follows from activity, then it is clear that criticism alone can do nothing to challenge the actual material foundations of a given idea. Hence, without understanding the fundamental importance of revolutionary practice and activity in creating social change, one is left with an insurmountable rift between materialist philosophy and sociology.

## — Of The Mind, But Not From The Mind —

I would not be the first to identify gender as a real abstraction. Insofar as it relates to our subjective experience, and insofar as it is simultaneously determined by our objective, combined human activity, gender is — like value — *of the mind, but not from the mind*. This real abstraction, which has an objective basis, is inconceivable to our Neo-Moneyists, who, like Feuerbach, see abstract, arbitrary ideals as the sole determination of human activity. They too are inconsistent materialists, because they believe that if only people ceased to *believe in gender*, then this is tantamount to *abolishing gender itself*. And some would dare to call this Marxism! But gender is not merely a body part or an idea. How can one speak of abolishing gender without even mentioning

the gendered division of labor? What of the family? What of marriage and prostitution?

It's this same kind of misunderstanding that leads people to ask, "why do I have to participate in your self perception?" The premise of the question is that gender is nothing more than a thought in an individual's mind, and that the complete expression of this thought is little more than a lifestyle choice. But this question overlooks that we all already "participate" in the gender of cis people, and that what is really troublesome about trans identity is not the expectation of participation, but rather the expectation that we be more conscious of our pre-existing participation. Our self-perception is not merely incongruent with our body, but, fundamentally, how we are perceived (and, thus, *treated*) by society. Gender is a social dynamic that arises from combined human activity, and, hence, changing one's gender necessarily entails changing how other people see and treat you; it *necessarily* entails the voluntary participation of the rest of society (or a large portion of it at any rate). It further misses the extent to which *gendering* is, in patriarchal society, primarily a passive, social process. For example, an ancient Jewish *androgynos*, as described in the Talmud, was on the one hand, a novel sex category defined strictly by physiological traits, but it was, at the same time, a gender category which codified how an *androgynos* was to act, what responsibilities they had, and what privileges they were or were not privy to. According to the [Mishnah](#) (emphasis added):

The [androgynos] is in some ways like men, and in other ways like women. In other ways he is like men and women, and in others he is like neither men nor women.

In what ways is he like men? He causes impurity with white discharge, like men; **He dresses like men... And he must perform all the commandments of the Torah, like men.**

And in what ways is he like women? He causes impurity with red discharge, like women... **And he does not share [in the inheritance] with the sons, like women... And he is disqualified from being a witness, like women.**

Of course, the *androgynos* had no say in the matter of whether these laws applied to them or not. They certainly could have self-identified otherwise, but it's plainly obvious that the right to gender self-determination can not possibly mean anything if it remains purely individual, purely a matter of self-perception.

Let's be more concrete: if a trans woman were male *in a social sense*, then she would be privy to the same privilege, rights, and status that men are, but this is clearly not the case. Transmisogyny exposes one to discrimination (in law, employment, healthcare, housing, etc), to police brutality, to violence at the hands of men generally, to pervasive enmity and harassment, and so on. A common argument that trans women historically held the same legal privileges as men claims that trans women could vote while cis women could not, but this too is incorrect. In the first place, transsexual social practices<sup>5</sup> were, until relatively recently, criminal offenses, and felons did not (and often still do not) have the right to vote. In the second place, trans identity itself was pathologized, and

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5 "Travesty" (crossdressing), sodomy, and "mayhem" (body modification).

the mentally ill, likewise, did not (and sometimes still do not) have the right to vote either. Ergo, transsexuals not only did not have the right to suffrage, but the women's suffrage movement did not guarantee suffrage to trans women (just as it did not guarantee suffrage to black cis women or cis female felons). Conversely, trans men, or at least female-to-male transvestites however they identified, were in various instances able to vote (or to join the army, for that matter) so long as they passed convincingly — they were socially recognized and treated as men.

Even in modern law we still find a similar double-standard to that of the *androgynos*: a transsexual woman must accept the *legal responsibilities* of both men and women while not being privy to any of the privileges of the former. For example, consider the case of [Andrea Jones](#), who was on the one hand denied a gender marker change to female, and on the other hand arrested for baring her chest in public. Clearly the law considered her a man when she applied for the gender change, but then considered her female when she was arrested for baring her chest in public (a crime that does not apply to men). The inconsistency of the law, which prioritized her *transfeminine biology* (female breasts) over her legal gender, tacitly betrayed that it really did see Andrea as female, even while previously denying as much.

Another argument that trans women are not socially women will claim that trans women do not participate in the gendered division of labor. There is a certain truth to this in the sense that trans people (and actually, gay people too) are habitually pushed out of the domestic economy altogether: disowned by parents, prevented from child rearing by sterilization or by prohibitions on adoption, frequently considered unsuitable for marriage, and in certain cases not even legally permitted to marry at all. In no uncertain terms, one might go so far as to consider the transsexual a 'lumpengender,' as in someone who is *de-gendered*, or forcefully prohibited from socially participating as their gender identity. This absence of participation in the domestic economy clarifies that the transsexual does not hold the same privileged position in the family as a man — transsexual women do not exploit other women as a man would. Furthermore, because she is often pushed out of *both* the formal and domestic economy, the transsexual woman is thereby systemically pushed into prostitution or pornography for survival. Thus it is in the sex industry that the transsexual woman's position in the gendered division of labor becomes most apparent, with all the scorn, objectification, and deflated social status that goes along with it. Nay, more so! For cis women participate in both poles of sexual exploitation — both marriage and prostitution — which substitutes a certain degree of degradation for paternalism. The Jungian archetype of the Great Mother, which every woman embodies as mother and wife, symbolizes the contradictory qualities of fertility and virginity; in this role she is exalted as a nurturer and a creator of life, and so she is *protected* but also *infantilized*. By contrast, the Terrible Mother, which every woman becomes as the object of lust, is wicked, witch-like, and a temptress; she seeks sexual encounters not out of fertility but out of debauchery. Her mere presence causes crops to fail, natural disasters to befall the community, and, of course, sin to grow in the hearts of men. And man, who typically discovers transfemininity in brothels, street corners, and pornographic movies, naturally perceives the "Lilithine" alone in this taboo object of his shameful desires. And so, by a process of projection, the trans woman is constructed as a pervert and a fetishist, a degenerate, and a groomer — a villain whose destruction redeems her beguiled "victims."

It is, of course, the case that cis women and transsexuals have distinct experiences and oppressions, that there is not an exact 1:1 correspondence. A cis woman typically doesn't experience transmisogyny (unless she is mistaken for trans while entering a restroom, or is perhaps an athlete with elevated testosterone levels). A trans woman will never have to worry about getting an abortion (at least, not until uterus implantation surgeries become available). A trans man's experience of misogyny or male privilege will heavily depend on how well he passes, whereas a trans woman will experience misogyny if she passes, and transmisogyny if she doesn't. There are complexities and differences, but — more importantly — substantial overlap. Overlap not only in experience and in oppression, but overlap in the historical-material origins of each of our oppressions. The real movement of history has thus provided a real basis for unity, and yet the transmisogynists would drive a wedge between us. In portraying an antagonism between the interests of the class and the interests of its gender-oppressed minorities, an antagonism that exists only in their mind and not in reality, the transphobic Marxists expose themselves as mere demagogues.

### — Concluding Remarks —

Our great apostles of gender criticism mistake their mysticism for materialism. By mere criticism they intend to excise the Spectre of Gender back to the astral plane so that any further profaning of their natural order will finally cease. This is the ultimate hypocrisy of our transphobic Marxists: they call themselves materialists, but in prioritizing their transmisogyny, they are compelled to indulge in idealism to deny the objectivity of gender. They call themselves “dialecticians,” but in prioritizing their transmisogyny, they are compelled to espouse metaphysical abstractions like “immutability.” Like Hegel, they stand with their heads fixed to the ground. But in confounding the “active” element of Hegelianism and denying their own idealism, they descend a stage lower, seeing themselves standing right-side up, as though the whole world were moving downward to meet their head.

In the final analysis, this inconsistent, zoological materialism is of great utility to the ruling bourgeoisie, precisely because it denies the possibility of social revolution. It is of additional utility to the fascist movement because it not only shares certain ideological elements, but practically assists in propelling a vilified minority into a scapegoat for the bourgeoisie in the midst of imperial decline. That is why this ideology finds support in think tanks, the reactionary press, the legislatures, and among the disaffected petty bourgeoisie and the most chauvinistic elements of the monopoly capitalists — but, in general, not among the working and oppressed masses. Among the fascist petty bourgeoisie you will see that the supposed attack on “wokeness” in public schools is nothing less than an attack on public education itself; that the attack on gender affirming healthcare is only the tip of the spear of an attack on healthcare and reproductive autonomy in general; that the attack on “wokeness” in mainstream media is only a sublimated attack on monopoly capital from the perspective of petty capital. Transmisogyny is the rallying cry of the modern fascist who yearns for the security and order promised by tradition, who desires a return to the romantic age of competitive capitalism.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the theory of the vanguard of transmisogyny, whose

indulgence in the elixir of chauvinism is so intoxicating, so completely blinding, that “wokeness” becomes the primary contradiction in their analysis. In sublimely radical terms, what these proletarian heroes hate about the prison system is not its function as an institution of class war or slave labor, but rather that a woman might have to occupy the same cell as someone who might have (or might have once had) a penis. The problem with the pharmaceutical industry is not that it withholds essential medicines and treatments in exchange for profit, or that it neglects to invest in useful but unprofitable products — no, the problem is that it sells poison which it merely brainwashes the public into consuming. Nationalization of the pharmaceutical industry? *No comrade, we have to stop them from “transing the kids”!* The problem with the corporate press? Only that the particular monopolists of today have a “woke agenda.” How revolutionary! How utterly profound!

Whether they are committed foot soldiers or merely useful idiots, we’d be justified to view these transphobic “Communists” as servants to fascism. These unwitting adherents of Feuerbach are distorters of Marxism who wallow in the mud of petty chauvinism — a particular kind of chauvinism, which, “coincidentally,” is crucial for the modern fascist movement. By deception, they mask their disdain for the working class by railing against transsexuals and wokeness instead, and by calling this a defense of the worker’s movement. So make no mistake: If you give them an inch by compromising on trans liberation, they will take a mile. If you leave them unchallenged, they will continue raising other distorters, like a lich resurrecting an army of the damned. And to our queer brothers and sisters, be reassured: These dogs do not represent authentic Marxism!

## In Summary:

- Synthetic sexual alteration — in other words, medical transition — is a legitimate process of sexual metamorphosis and not merely simulation. Immutability is a bourgeois abstraction that denies the process of qualitative change in reality.
- Overall sexual dimorphism does not belie intermediate sexes. Biological sex is a collection of *mutable* traits appearing in a variety of sets with a bimodal distribution.
- Human nature, like social and economic forms, is a historical product. Similarly, sex and gender have developed as concepts and as social relations over time and across societies.
- Gender is a historically specific social relation which divides people into social classes for the benefit of one at the expense of the others. It finds its material basis in the division of reproductive labor, and determines a member's rights, responsibilities, status, and role in the labor process. In the first instance, this division is primarily based on the dimorphic characteristics relevant to human reproduction, although ancient societies tended to have non-binary sex and gender distinctions that were seen as indirectly crucial to the reproductive process.
- Gender is not a body part, an idea, or a lifestyle. It is a real abstraction. As such, it can not be abolished by contemplation or criticism alone. It also follows that a trans person cannot suffice with a strictly *personal* identity, because, as a social relation, gender is necessarily defined by group participation.
- The methodology of sexual metaphysics, which mechanical materialists of all stripes and colors accept, is strictly bourgeois and patriarchal ideology, and is therefore at odds with Marxism and any politics of liberation. Material, biological, and objective reality stands firmly in opposition to anti-trans chauvinism.