Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism by Nancy C. M. Hartsock
Review by: Iris Marion Young
Ethics, Vol. 95, No. 1 (Oct., 1984), pp. 162-164
Published by: The University of Chicago Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2380562
Accessed: 21/06/2014 09:12

than others, are ideas. Without understanding the logic of the "production of consciousness" we are unlikely to get at the essence of this phenomenon. Thus Nowak's methodology, which calls for an undogmatic essentialism, is likely to turn out to be inconsistent with historical materialism, both of the Marxian and the non-Marxian kind. We cannot describe the essential structure of socioeconomic development abstracting from ideas, especially moral ideas.

I do not recommend this book because it is right. I do recommend it because it has great theoretical depth, originality, and clarity. Even when it is wrong, it is wrong in extremely interesting ways. Like Popper's work its main value is likely to be in what it provokes from others by way of elaboration and/or refutation.

KAROL SOŁTAN
University of Maryland

Hartsock, Nancy C. M. *Money, Sex and Power: Toward a Feminist Historical Materialism.* New York: Longman Inc., 1983. Pp. x+310.

This book makes important contributions to conceptual analyses of power, the epistemology and methodology of political theory, and inquiry about the social structural foundations of theories. Reflecting on and synthesizing an immense amount of literature, Hartsock develops both Marxist and feminist critiques of some of the most influential approaches to thinking about power in contemporary political theory. She argues for an epistemological position she calls the feminist standpoint as the most revealing from which to understand the structure of power and domination.

Hartsock focuses her excellent critique of contemporary mainstream political theory on those theorists who utilize market models of interaction. These include not only Homans and Blau, but also several other writers not usually identified as exchange theorists, including Laswell and Kaplan, Parsons, and Dahl and Polsby. Hartsock argues that each of these uses market assumptions, such as that politics is the entrance of uncoerced and equal persons into the market for power, and that power is analogous to money.

These theorists, she argues, tend to fall into a contradiction. On the one hand, the market model fosters the unrealistic assumption that interactions involving power begin with participants who are equal and uncoerced. On the other hand, these theorists also assume hierarchy and stratification and often argue that exchange relations make such hierarchy inevitable. This theoretical tension results, Hartsock argues, in part from the fact that these theories remove relations of power from their institutional context and ignore structures of domination. Use of a market model of power relations tends to obscure the real operations and structure of power. Hartsock's argument in these dense yet clearly articulated chapters is cogent and important.

Hartsock further claims that certain Marxist theorists, in particular Poulantzas and Miliband, also fall subject to a market model of social relations at the level of methodology. Miliband considers power primarily as the agency of the privileged classes, whereas Poulantzas holds the contrary opinion that power results from structural determinations of the system. Hartsock claims that this theoretical distinction between agency and structure implies a separation of mind and action which she argues results from capitalism's separation of production from exchange.

In this way Poulantzas and Miliband continue the market model of power. Hartsock's argument is extremely abstract here, because she does not explain concretely how these theorists have separated mind and action. I find the argument unconvincing, moreover, since it could well be that Marxists are guilty of separating mind and action for reasons other than their bewitchment by an exchange model.

Hartsock claims that the Marxian critique and explanation of commodity society provides the basis for a theory of power that can transcend the market model. She develops a clear and coherent interpretation of Lukacs's theory of reification and his notion of the standpoint of the proletariat. She reads Marx's theory of alienation and account of power as grounded in class relations in novel and important ways.

In her feminist analysis Hartsock focuses on the connection of power with eros, and the domination embedded in Western culture's construction of eros. Feminist writers such as Dworkin and Griffin have claimed that male sexuality under patriarchy entails a distorted desire in which hostility and domination are central to sexual excitement, and a denial of the body's fleshy vulnerability in a fear of fusion with others. In an original move, Hartsock uses this analysis of male sexuality to formulate a critique of patriarchal conceptions of politics.

She shows how the agonal community of ancient Greece consisted in an erotic relation of men with one another structured by competition and denial of the body, in which the victor is the most loved. This model of politics, which glorifies struggle, conquest, and the denial of mortality, Hartsock argues, still underlies our political ideals. While her hypothesis is certainly controversial, it deserves further consideration as an interpretation of a variety of political contexts. Applying this theory to the politics of the nuclear arms race, for example, might produce important new understandings.

Hartsock rightly alerts us to the combative and body-denying aspects of the polis, which has been idealized in much political theory. Her account is too one-sided, however, and does not acknowledge that the polis may have been contradictory, having both the virtues of democracy and rationality often attributed to it and the vices she discovers. Hartsock recognizes the more positive account of the polis in her discussion of Arendt. She suggests that Arendt's womanhood enabled her to see in the polis a model of equality and community rather than the competition male theorists glorify. Hartsock claims more generally that women theorists of power such as Pitkin and Emmet, as well as Arendt, have tended to conceptualize power more in terms of positive capacity and less in terms of domination than men, and that this difference is grounded in gender.

This claim, which I find somewhat implausible, rests on Hartsock's concept of the feminist standpoint. Analogous to her notion of the standpoint of the proletariat, the feminist standpoint provides, she claims, the most adequate epistemology for a theory of power. The feminist standpoint emerges from the distinctive experience women have because of the sexual division of labor. The gender identity men develop by setting themselves in opposition to their mothers, coupled with the distance from nature and the body that their work typically has, makes men take an oppositional and dominating attitude toward both people and nature. Because women do not have to oppose themselves to their mothers in developing gender identity, and because their domestic labor involves relating to others, women's experience of social and political relations involves more stress on connection and cooperation. From this feminist standpoint we can criticize existing social relations and theories of power, and develop a better theory and society.

The strength of Hartsock's analysis lies in its seeking to show how theories of power arise from living experience as it is structured by power differences. The problems, as I see them, are that Hartsock is overly essentialist and psychological in her explanation. She distills the variable and changing gender characteristics that define men's and women's lives into *the* masculine and *the* feminine experience. She finds each mode of experience ultimately grounded in psychological effects of women's mothering on boys and girls. Social structures such as state and family, church and pub, office and construction crew, as they determine the nature of power and the relation of men and women, have entirely disappeared from view. The arguments and analyses of this book nevertheless deserve detailed discussion by social and political theorists. No other writer to date has faced so directly questions of the relation of political power and theories of power to gender and class, and offered so much material for formulating answers.

IRIS MARION YOUNG
Worcester Polytechnic Institute

Bernstein, Richard J. *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics, and Praxis.*
Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983. Pp. xix + 284. $25.00 (cloth); $8.95 (paper).

The dedication of Bernstein's new book reveals more than its title: the debt incurred to Arendt, Gadamer, Habermas, and Rorty remains far more substantive than the attempt to transcend the Either/Or legacy of Cartesian Anxiety (Bernstein's terms). Thus the reader expecting to be led by argument to a happier region of thought will soon discover that the passage from part 1 to part 4, from the dreaded dichotomy to the promised land of Praxis, does not mark a definite progress. Rather, this exploration of our notion of rationality maps all "the pitfalls of the various forms of objectivism and relativism" (p. 107): Bernstein offers not a new topos but a new topography. Yet this characterization should not be considered a criticism, for what is needed is a refocusing of intellectual attention away from the impasse of this dichotomy and onto more fruitful topics. The fabulous four's common inter-est (as Arendt or Gadamer would clarify) in community and communication, debate and dialogue, surely provides such an alternative, and Bernstein has no peer in bringing out their common ground. His presentation of their thought is excellent (particularly the superb treatment of Gadamer), and the setting of their efforts in the contemporary context (from anthropology to philosophy of science, from Apel to Winch) is extensive. Inevitably details are often blurred. For example, the rift between Gadamer and Habermas, despite the clamor of the protagonists, is not unbridgeable, and Kuhn and Feyerabend are entirely commensurable in their attack on commensurability. But while Bernstein (happily) dissipates most of the heat of these disputes, most of the light they succeeded in shedding subsists as Bernstein often proves clearer than the authors he discusses. After all, given the book's aim, the author should not be faulted for the suspicious proximity of Aristotle, Marx, Dewey, and Heidegger—admittedly in somewhat diluted versions—on the map of contemporary thought. More surprising is the relative absence of French thinkers (from Derrida and Foucault to Lyotard and Serres) in Bernstein's tour d'horizon.