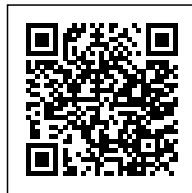


# PATRIARCHY NEVER EXISTED

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The surge of neo-feminist ideology represents an anthropological revolution. This is what the historian and anthropologist Emmanuel Todd thinks, and in his latest book, *Où sont-elles?*, offers "a sketch of the history of women." As with his previous works on family systems, there are brilliant analyses which, if they are sometimes twisted, have the merit of originality. He proves his non-conformism from the start by showing, with figures, that cases of femicide have been decreasing for forty years, or by affirming that "the destruction of patriarchy was easy in our country because it had never really existed."

The first feminist wave was about citizenship (suffragettes demanded the right to vote). The second about sexuality (contraception, abortion...). The third about identity. The concepts of this neo-feminism—patriarchy, gender, intersectionality—of recent American importation, are in Todd's eyes harmful for a correct understanding of women's history, for this ideology "veils more than it transforms the reality of the world." An expression of resentment, it leads to a war of the sexes.

In the wake of his previous research, Todd analyzes at length the evolution of family models since the Neolithic era on different continents. Among hunter-gatherers, within a nuclear family (father + mother + children), men hunt and women gather: this sexual division of labor is universal; it is not a simple social construction as feminists would have it. The male domination is rather relative and very variable, and is expressed in collective activities (politics, great works, war, etc.).

Then, Todd focuses on the relationship between Christianity and the status of women. The Church was "a pole of resistance to male brutality;" the sacredness of marriage protected women from the instability of men and the moderation of sexuality from marital rape. It is Protestantism which was unfavourable to women—Luther gives a central place to the father of the family, and the retreat of the cult of the Virgin Mary in favour of Eve the sinful woman contributes to a masculinism. And it is precisely in reaction to this Protestant "patricentrism" that feminism was born in Anglo-American and Scandinavian countries.

How can we understand the emancipation of the last 70 years? The sexual revolution began in 1965. The legalization of the pill and abortion consecrated the loss of male power: "It is now the woman who decides whether or not to have a child." The massive arrival of women on the labor market freed them from economic dependence, "removed the need for the human couple." Women have more higher education than men (52% versus 44%), thus establishing an "educational matridominance," and marry men of lower status—a complete reversal. However, this so-called liberation, which was accompanied

by growing anxiety and social unease, was also the cause of the "final collapse of Catholicism" (a theme dear to the author). It also has the consequence of eroding the collective feeling against the background of the collapse of democracy.

The success of feminism illustrated by #MeToo is explained by the domination of women from the petty bourgeoisie in teaching and research, especially in the humanities, which is the domain of ideology. However, this evolution is opposed by a certain male resistance in the highest social strata (the top 4% of society), especially among business leaders and state bureaucrats. Thus, our society "lives in a tension between ideological matridominance and economic-bureaucratic patridominance." The struggle of the sexes is thus doubled by a struggle between the middle classes and the upper classes.

One regrets the treatment of homosexuality in this book: Todd considers it as natural and universal, and envisages "the Catholic Church as a vast homosexual institution" which he contrasts with Protestant homophobia, and links the emergence of the gay or transgender identity to Christianity's obsessive rejection of sexuality, etc. With such flaws aside, this book offers useful tools for deconstructing neofeminist ideology.

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*[Featured image](#): "The Gilded Cage," by Evelyn De Morgan; painted ca. 1890-1919.*

