

What is Federici's Critique of Housework a Critique of

Zining Zhang

Yangzhou Polytechnic College, Jiangsu Yangzhou 225000

Abstract: Federici called on society to pay for domestic work. She attacked housework and made great contributions to women's liberation. Criticizing housework and unpaid work is not just for the benefit of money, although it is a step forward. Criticizing the essence of housework is actually criticizing the exploitation of the entire capitalist social system and criticizing capitalists for acquiescing in or even forcing this unpaid labor force for their own benefit. Her criticism awakens the whole women, liberates women, and enables women to get rid of their inherent roles. It is also an important link to challenge the existing capitalist economic system.

Keywords: federici's critique, housework, critique

Introduction

Federici creatively put forward the concept of housework wage and linked his feminism with Marx's social reproduction, forming a new interpretation of the social reproduction concept. For a long time, domestic work has generally been regarded as a woman's obligation. However, housework is also a kind of labor, producing products, and generating value, but there is no return. Silvia Federici tells the story of this generation of women through her analysis of housework: for them, politics is primitive, full of passion, and often lives under the shadow of meaningless Marxism. She described in detail the subtle violence of domestic work and sexual services, the futility of equating wage work with liberation work, and the continuous invisibility of female reproductive work. In the context of globalization, the exploitation of women is increasing day by day.

1. Federici criticizes female housework

Critique of housework is imminent. Women's understanding of housework has solidified. Because society has imposed on women the idea that housework is an obligation and an expression of love. Women are indeed full of love for their families. They wash clothes, cook, and raise children. These are all love for their families. Federici's criticism of housework is not to deny women's love, but to alert women that such love can come from spontaneous love and should not be the love imposed on women by society. This kind of social contract, which is similar to consensus, regards women's housework as a natural and inevitable task, just as people must drink water and eat, being born as women must do housework. Such rhetoric makes people accept that housework is unpaid and strengthens the concept that housework is not a kind of work.

2. About what social reproduction is

Social reproduction refers to the continuous repetition and renewal of the production process. The process of social reproduction is an organic whole composed of four elements: production, distribution,

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exchange, and consumption.

Marxist political economics generalizes the complicated social and economic activities as the process of social reproduction. The so-called social reproduction refers to the continuous repetition and renewal of the production process. The process of social reproduction is an organic whole composed of four elements: production, distribution, exchange and consumption.

Production is directly engaged in the production of material materials. Distribution refers to the distribution of products, including the distribution of means of production and the distribution of means of consumption. The former belongs to production itself. Generally speaking, distribution refers to the distribution of newly created products or values (i.e., National income) at a specific time. Exchange refers to the process in which people exchange activities and labor products with each other. Exchange refers to the exchange of goods between people based on equivalence. Commodity circulation is the exchange of commodities with money as the medium as a whole.

Consumption includes production consumption and living consumption. The former belongs to production itself, while the latter is people's consumption of various material materials and refined products to meet their personal needs.

Production, distribution, exchange, and consumption are the four elements intrinsically and organically linked. They depend on each other, connect with each other, and restrict each other, forming a unity organism.

As one of the factors of social reproduction, exchange "is the medium factor between production and the distribution party and the consumption party determined by production." It is connected with production and distribution at one end and consumption at the other end. Therefore, the exchange is in an intermediary position in social reproduction.

Only when the basic relationship between the four links is clearly defined in general, and then the interaction between exchange and production, exchange and distribution, exchange and consumption is deeply investigated with emphasis on exchange, can we deeply realize that exchange is an essential link in social reproduction and an objective factor for the operation of the five permanent members of social economy.

Labor reproduction refers to the restoration and renewal of laborers' labor ability. It includes the maintenance and restoration of workers' labor ability, the accumulation and teaching of labor skills, and the reproduction, cultivation, and supplement of the new labor force. In the process of production, workers produce specific products and consume individual physical and mental power. Only after proper rest and personal consumption (including the needs of food, clothing, housing, and use) can the consumed labor ability be compensated. In order to provide a steady stream of labor, workers must also support their families and reproduce.

The labor ability of laborers is the recovery, renewal, and development of their physical strength and intelligence. Reproduction of labor force includes not only the continuous recovery, renewal, and enhancement of physical strength and intelligence of the current generation of workers, but also the continuous education, training, and supplement of the new generation of the labor force. The labor force is a fundamental element of social production, and labor force reproduction is one of the essential contents of social reproduction. The labor ability of laborers is the recovery, renewal, and development of their physical strength and intelligence. Reproduction of labor force includes not only the continuous recovery, renewal, and enhancement of physical strength and intelligence of the current generation of workers, but also the continuous education, training, and supplement of the new generation of the labor force. The labor force is a basic element of social production, and labor force reproduction is one of the essential contents

of social reproduction.

4. The transitivity of social reproduction

Social reproduction is transitive^[1], the workers of social reproduction are women, at least at that time, the vast majority of women assumed such responsibilities. Their jobs are cooking, washing clothes, taking care of children, reproducing offspring, and so on. All the jobs related to social reproduction are undertaken by women. Indeed, Marx did not write in detail about the inequality between men and women. However, his view on inquiry logic is important to help us theorize the structure, process, and contradiction of capitalism, which are the basis of visible phenomena called oppression of women or gender inequality. “Marx historicizes competitive market relations and their corresponding political and legal frameworks by identifying the capitalist coercive (i.e., independent of people’s will), unequal and exploitative relations of production underlying the sphere of ‘Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham’ ” ^[2].

Similarly, the social reproduction mentioned by Marx is transitive, the exploitation of women in social reproduction is also transitive, and the inequality suffered by women is also transitive. For the same reason, once the rules are formed, men can oppress women imperceptibly. In the family, women are not only the workers of social reproduction but also the oppressed of both sexes. The same workers of social reproduction are also a kind of oppression. Under this double oppression, this is also why feminists like Federici are needed to come forward and analyze the forms of oppression of women and call loudly for housework wages because this is not as simple as wages or money.

We identify ourselves as Marxist feminists, and we take this to indicate a new definition of class, whose old definition has limited the scope and effectiveness of the traditional left and the new left. This new definition is based on the subordination of the worker without work to the hired worker behind which is hidden the productivity, that is, the exploitation, of the work of women in the house, and the cause of their more intense exploitation outside of it. Such class analysis presupposes a new area of struggle, the subversion not only of the factory and the office but of the community. ^[3].

5. Social reproduction and female housework

From the previous definition of social reproduction, it can be found that social reproduction is actually closely related to women’s housework. Analyze according to the previous definition. “Maintenance and restoration of workers’ own labor ability.” The recovery of labor ability requires food to maintain physical strength, so who does a meal for the whole family in the family? Generally speaking, it is a woman. “The reproduction, cultivation, and supplement of the new labor force” is, in short, the reproduction of the next generation. Yes, the work of giving birth to the next generation requires both parties to work hard, but the man has nothing to do after finishing this process, just watching his wife give birth to the child. Women bear the pain of the reproductive process. “The labor ability of laborers is the recovery, renewal, and development of their physical strength and intelligence.” The renewal and development of intelligence here can be understood as the education of children, including family education and school education. Who generally conducts family education? Women. Who sends the children to school in school education? Most of them are women. It can be seen that in the process of reproduction in this society, women have paid energy, time, and physical strength, but all this has no return.

The women’s educational salary movement is a counterattack against unfairness. But this movement is not so easy to realize. “The campaign for wages for housework was launched in the summer of 1972 in Padua with the formation of the International Feminist Collective by a group of women from Italy, England, France, and the United States. Its objective was to open a process of international feminist

mobilization that would force the state to recognize that housework is work—that is, an activity that should be remunerated as it contributes to the production of the labor force and produces capital, thus enabling every other form of production to take place.”^[4]

This movement revealed the root of “women’s oppression” in capitalist society and the primary mechanism for capitalism to maintain its power and divide the working class. It was a revolutionary introspection. The production activities of the whole human race are inseparable from the maintenance of power by capitalism. In this kind of relationship, a large amount of workers’ working ability is squeezed out. This kind of oppression is obviously not enough, because compared with paid labor, unpaid reproduction labor is obviously more valuable, which can also control labor costs. This sport is of considerable significance, but many women do not realize that it is necessary. “The early feminist perpetuation of the notion “work liberates women” alienated many poor and working-class women, especially non-white women, from the feminist movement for a number of reasons. Campaigns like “wages for housework,” whose organizers simultaneously challenged sexist definitions of work and the economic structures of capitalism, did not succeed in radicalizing the public’s view of feminist definitions of work. Barber was correct when he made the point that these women often desire to quit working because the work they do is not liberating: Rethinking the Nature of Work”^[5].

It is necessary to ask for wages. Although this is only the first step, seek society to realize that housework is also a job and eliminate people’s disregard for housework. Wages are crucial in this campaign for equality. First of all, wages can unite the people and unite them. The reproduction of the whole society is based on the whole capitalist system. However, housework and childbirth are problems that all women have to face, every moment of the day. No one can stay out of it. At the same time, housework wages are challenging the exploitation of the whole system. Since Marx, it has been clear that capital rules and develops through the wage, that is, that the foundation of capitalist society was the wage laborer and his or her direct exploitation. What has been neither clear nor assumed by the organizations of the working-class movement is that precisely through the wage has the exploitation of the non-wage laborer been organized. This exploitation has been even more effective because the lack of a wage hid it. where women are concerned, their labor appears to be a personal service outside of the capital.”^[6] This will enable those exploiters to understand women’s demands. What they demand is not only that women’s work should be treated correctly, but also a counterattack against unfair systems. Federici put forward a meaning about household wages, that is, to use the power of capital to fight against capital and to use economic means to fight against certain economism. “Against any accusation of “economism’ we should remember that money is capital, i.e., it is the power to command labor.

Therefore to reappropriate that money which is the fruit of our labor—of our mothers’ and grandmothers’ labor—means at the same time to undermine capital’s power to extract more labor from us. And we should not distrust the power of the wage to demystify our femininity and making visible our work—our femininity as work—since the lack of a wage has been so powerful in shaping this role and hiding our work. To demand wages for housework is to make it visible that our minds, our bodies, and emotions have all been distorted for a specific function, in a specific function, and then have been thrown back at us as a model to which we should all conform if we want to be accepted as women in this society.”^[7] This creative idea makes the concept of household wages more valuable. Because before that, it may only be a matter of gender equality, but to use economic means against the economic system here is to declare war on the entire unfair system. This is of epoch-making significance. If wages are not used as a counterweight, housework will never become a real job. To want wages to do housework is to expose the fact that housework is already the currency of capital, and capital has unconsciously passed through the

social reproduction system, treating women's cooking and childbirth as unpaid labor. "At the same time, it shows that we have cooked, smiled, throughout the years not because it was easier for us than for anybody else, but because we did not have any other choice."^[7] It takes much effort from the inability to resist to success, but the beginning of this resistance is housework wages.

Federici seeks housework wages. Apart from the above-mentioned recognition of housework and a fair system, are there any other reasons? Another very important reason is to completely change the role of women. In the past, women used to be housewives, but this was unfair. If we want to realize women's liberation truly, we must liberate women from their families. Only in this way can people realize that women do not have to do housework, but men can also do it. Wages for housework are only the beginning, but its message is clear: from now on, they have to pay us because, as women, we do not guarantee anything any longer. We want to call work what is work so that eventually we might rediscover what is love and create our sexuality, which we have never known. Moreover, from the viewpoint of work, we can ask not only one wage but many wages, because we have been forced into many jobs at once. We are housemaids, prostitutes, nurses, shrinks; this is the essence of the "heroic" spouse who is celebrated on "Mother's Day." We say: stop celebrating our exploitation, our supposed heroism. From now on, we want money for each moment of it so that we can refuse some of it and eventually all of it."^[4]

6. Conclusion

Is Federici attack on housework is only the beginning. It is to make the whole women discover social injustice, gender inequality, and solidification of roles under the anesthesia of daily life. Women, who bear the heavy burden of their families, have not received the respect and return they deserve. The purpose of attacking housework and seeking wages is to free women from the heavy burden of housework. Housework is not a natural duty for women but also for men. This change of role is extremely critical, and housework is the most important means to oppress women and solidify their roles. At the same time, due to the oppression of the capitalist system, women have become unpaid laborers. The demand for domestic wages is to resist this system of exploitation, and domestic work is the means of exploitation in the capitalist system. After Federici, more and more people have paid attention to this level, and the scope of the feminist movement has become wider and wider.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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