

to make the point (p. 35). She does not see, therefore, that merely to replace monogamy by a plurality of marriages is to retain private property relations in the future socialist society. (The idea that the abolition of the family could be by-passed by changing its form is analogous to Proudhon's scheme for workers to buy the whole of France out of their savings, which he understood as abolishing private property: see Engels' letter to Marx in Selected Correspondence p. 34.) But Juliet Mitchell never admits that the family is a form of private property—hence she contrasts administrative measures with free choice, the social with the individual. Thus she says that 'any society will require some institutionalized and social recognition of personal relationship', without explaining who requires that, and why. And although she does recognize the family as a social institution, she really sees marriage in our society as a free choice of man and woman, she confuses the relationship between the sexes with marriage.

But all this flows naturally from her ahistoricity, or rather from her evolutionist standpoint. Society becomes a 'long passage from Nature to Culture', and socialism is defined (!) by the unity of equality and freedom. In this view of history and society, Marx might never have existed.

What one can ultimately hold against Marx and Engels is that they were not more interested in women, that they did not see the question of women's position as being very important (which is why they give them a merely symbolic value whenever it comes to the point). But if they were wrong in failing to understand the importance of the emancipation of women to the class struggle, Juliet Mitchell certainly does not make any clearer why this was.

Perhaps I should make it clear that my concern is not primarily with methodology: it is with the problem of the emancipation of women. The history which could provide an analysis of the position of women and a context for their emancipation (politicization) is not some Hegelian concept—it is a concrete history which still largely remains to be written and made. And this history can only become concrete if its basis is the class struggle, subsuming feminism and at the same time transcending it. It is only within the praxis of a hegemonic movement that it is possible to pose 'demands' which cannot be absorbed by the existing ruling class—i.e. which are not reformist.

Quintin Hoare

Juliet Mitchell writes:

It is difficult to take issue with Quintin Hoare's criticisms of my article. He seems to have totally misunderstood my work, largely to have misconstrued the application of Althusser's theses, and at least partially to have failed to see the meaning of a crucial area of Marx's thought. It is pointless for me to rebut every random charge and correct

each misrepresentation of my points. It seems more worthwhile to restate my argument and then to confront the major substantial disagreement that underlines his refutation of my analysis and proposals.

However, I cannot reiterate my position without first rejecting the assumption of Quintin Hoare's final paragraph—the separation of methodology from content. I consider that the two are correlatives in any theoretical argument. In fact, Quintin Hoare's earlier remarks would confirm this: 'Her method is more than a method—it demonstrates her whole ideological orientation.' Indeed it does. In defending the content of my analysis I am, *ipso facto*, defending the method and vice-versa.

My thesis is that women are confined within the family which is a segmentary, monolithic unit, today largely separated off from production and hence from social human activity. The reason why this confinement is made possible, is the need for women to fulfill three roles; they must provide sexual satisfaction for their partners and give birth to children and rear them. All three roles man shares with other mammals. This confirms De Beauvoir's contention that women are relegated to the species while men—through work—transcend it. The world of production into which women can and should assert themselves, surrounds the family. Hence my assertion that the economy *is dominant*—but only in the final instance. What I see as innovatory in my article is the attempt to differentiate the separate structures which make up the family and my proposals that follow from this differentiation. Here I take issue with Quintin Hoare but not with Karl Marx.

Marx never saw the family as an unalterable 'whole'. I quote: 'One cannot, in general, speak of the family "as such"' (*The German Ideology*). But Quintin Hoare seems to want this: 'This method (of differentiating women's condition into structures)' is not a movement of the parts to the whole and back—not at any moment does she provide a totalising synthesis, so that even in her conclusion the structures remain separate.' This separation of structures is precisely my point. Bourgeois ideology provides us with a unificatory concept—'the family'. A socialist strategy for women should try to disrupt this monolithic unit and the way to do this is to keep its structures (the women's three roles) distinct; to prevent their integration into a single unit—the family. My method is my content. To ask for 'a return from the parts (the structures?) to the whole (the family?)' is to ask for a confirmation of the ahistoricity of the bourgeois concept itself. If this is not a Hegelian demand, what is? It is useless to try and counteract the ahistorical nature of this position with an assertion that what is needed is an historical account of women. Historicism (there are anyway a number of historical accounts of women through the ages) is here merely the other side of Quintin Hoare's ahistorical conception.

I would then totally disagree with Quintin Hoare in seeing the family as an undifferentiated whole. My concern is with women and while some may fulfil all three roles that make up the family others may be involved in one or none. To differentiate it is to allow for variability while maintaining throughout an awareness of its unitary form. My

strategic concern is with a separation of its functions. Three of the four randomly selected reforms that are pilloried in Quintin Hoare's first paragraph are illustrations of how the *process* of separation could be set in motion, not ends in themselves. The fourth—equal education—is a part of another demand, omitted by Quintin Hoare '*the right to equal work*', which is seen as correct strategy within the world of production. To label my article as 'reformist' is completely to misconstrue the term. Reformism is the proposal of ameliorative demands *which have no connection* with a larger strategic concern for liberation; the 'reformist's' suggestions *are* ends in themselves. In my penultimate paragraph I attack the monolithism of contemporary marriage and the family and propose the diversification of social relationships which are compressed into this institution. I write 'this would mean a plural range of institutions—where the family is only one, and its abolition implies none. Couples living together or not living together, long term unions with children, single parents bringing up children, extended kin groups etc.—all these could be encompassed in a range of institutions which matched the free invention and variety of men and women.' Quintin Hoare somehow understands this as a proposal for 'replacing monogamy by a plurality of marriages'. This misreading makes it redundant to correct a number of serious misconceptions and confusions towards the end of his criticism.

So much for this part of his misunderstanding of my article. There is a further substantial point underlying his disagreement. Quintin Hoare criticises me for 'never admitting that the family is a form of private property'. I don't admit it, because I don't think it is. It is a *means* for the retention and attainment of private property and so is the woman within it. But not unless women are literally exchange products can they be *identical* with objects and property. Industrialism *does* separate the family from its earlier immediate associations with the economy and this separation prevents in any case the total coincidence of the family and private property. It seems that Quintin Hoare is asking us to analyse the position of women in preindustrial conditions. Elsewhere he confirms this preoccupation: '. . . the "economist" approach of Marx and Engels is *the basis* for a discussion of the position of women. What specifies the position of women in history *until the industrial revolution* (my italics) is that her participation in production is mediated through the family'. To concentrate on this preindustrial area—even assuming the hypothesis is correct—would be to write history with a vengeance.