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Mihaela Frunza, Ideology and Feminism

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Through this book, Mihaela Frunza invites us to participate in a resourceful discussion between ideology and liberal feminism.

The author has chosen first to look into the *Political Philosophy of Liberal Feminism* and to explain the terminology she has made use of. In order to employ feminist political philosophy the author finds it useful to investigate this philosophy at the three levels of generality. Within this framework, one of the terms making up the phrase "feminist political philosophy" is considered to prevail over and determine the understanding of the other two. First a meaning will be assigned to the term "philosophy," second, one will be provided for the term "political," and third, one will be assigned to the term "feminism". In attempting to synthesize these three levels, one will soon realize that "feminist political philosophy" generically stands for the entire literature of feminist theory and studies.

Further on, in order to offer to the readers a broader and enriched perspective on the subject, the author examines the main theory of contemporary feminist liberalism and the writings of its renowned representatives of the second wave: Betty Friedan, Janet Radcliffe Richards and Susan Moller Okin.

Frunza makes use of a comparative and interdisciplinary approach that will help her, in the second chapter (*Ideology – an obsolete concept?*), to explore the central topic of the book: ideology and the liberal feminist perspective. From the very beginning, the author warns the readers that there are "as many definitions of ideology as the number of authors who have written about it" [p. 55]. Moreover, "This proliferation of definitions paradoxically coexists with the lack of concern over searching for a definition as a consequence of the desuetude of the concept" [p. 55]. However, throughout its history *ideology* has been regarded as a descriptive, positive or negative concept. In order to put the concept to work in the field of feminist theories, the author develops a relational analysis, namely *ideology* **and** *praxis*, and *science*, and *ethics*, and *language*. An additional discussion is involves the relation between ideology and two trans-disciplinary topics – dominance and the thinking of the *Other*. Also, coming from the realm of philosophy, the author draws the readers' attention to the endless debate regarding the *end of ideology*, and its counterpart: the *inevitability of ideology*.

Under the title of *Feminism as/and Ideology*, the third chapter brings into discussion the relationship(s) between ideology and feminism within feminist political theory. The author underscores the fact that the term *ideology* is not a central concept of feminist political theory and is only defined **in relation to** other central concepts of this theory. Michael Freeden is mentioned

here, as he has tried to provide a thorough analysis on the relation between ideology and feminism.

Furthermore, Frunza underlines some of the critiques raised against contemporary liberal feminism. A recurrent accusation is that feminism does not theorize or deal with universal concepts of political theory such as justice, freedom of the individual, equality, public vs. private sphere, and the state.

However, the author succeeds in undermining these accusations by providing important counter arguments of feminists who have integrated in their perspective these classical universal concepts and who have also pointed out the discriminations still present in various spheres of life. "What one ignores in such an approach are the internal complexities of theories of liberal feminism, which cannot be judged by a simplistic logic (...)" [p. 126]. Special concepts such as the distinction between sex and gender, patriarchate, affirmative action, and androgyny, have enriched current political theory.

Another aspect that Frunza has dealt with is the relationships established between feminist discourses and different types of ideologies. There are ideological nuclei that may be accepted, rejected, or both criticized and rejected at the same time. "Certainly, besides the ideological aspect, (liberal) feminism bears multiple dimensions, from philosophical ones to cultural ones. (..) the ideology of liberal feminism will continue its existence under one form or another due to the inevitability of ideology itself" [p. 159].

Frunza's book is well organized, with each chapter summarizing an area of debate: theory of liberal feminism, the concept ideology, and feminism in relation to ideology. Frunza is arguing that the relationship between ideology and feminism is a complex and diverse one, but not a conflictual one. Both ideology and liberal feminism are important if we are to understand the connections between those two core concepts. They are both essential parts of vital current debates. In the Romanian context, the major contribution of *Ideology and Feminism* is Frunza's fresh perspective on the relationship between ideology and second wave liberal feminism.