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Why Jineolojî? Re-Constructing the Sciences towards a Communal and Free Life

Internationalist Commune, Gönül Kaya

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Gönül Kaya is a journalist and representative of the Kurdish women's movement. This article is the transcript of her speech at the Jineolojî Conference in March 2014 in Cologne, Germany.

The Free Women's Movement of Kurdistan evaluates jineolojî as an important step in its ongoing intellectual, ideological-political self-defense and mobilization struggle of about 30 years. I would like to introduce — albeit briefly — the main principles of jineolojî, which the Kurdish women's movement offers to the women's movements around the world.

Jineolojî is described as the “creation of a women's paradigm” by the freedom struggle of Kurdish women. This represents a new phase from the perspective of the Kurdish women's movement. The Kurdish women's movement emerged and developed within the Kurdish national liberation struggle. From 1987 on, it began

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with specific and autonomous women's organization works. After this development, many important changes and transformations occurred in Kurdistan, which have also determined the societal struggle. On one hand, the Kurdish women's movement advanced its specific and autonomous organization internally, but on the other hand it transmitted and thus shared its findings with all areas of the societal struggle. The people's uprisings against the colonization of Kurdistan (in Kurdish: "Serhildan"), which started after 1989, were led by women. From the viewpoint of Kurdish society, this was the beginning of a national resistance phase with a new women-focused character. In this sense, the women's movement advanced its theoretical and practical work in fields such as intellect, politics, society, culture, and self-defense. The following key stages were: 1993 – formation of the women's army, 1996 – theory and practice for the emancipation from the patriarchal system, after 1998 – women's liberation ideology, 1999 – party formation, from 2000 on – construction of a democratic social system within the framework of a democratic, ecological, and gender-egalitarian societal paradigm. The creation of women's councils, academies, and cooperatives were achieved in this context. Under the motto "Women's liberation is the liberation of society", the women's movement focused on ideological, philosophical, and intellectual work. Within the frame of the unity between theory and practice, it worked towards a transformation of the thinking of women and society, as well as towards an increased consciousness. It was looking for answers to questions such as "Who is the woman? Where does she come from? Where does she go? How has she lived until today? How should women live? What kind of society?" and developed a critique of the prevailing scientific field.

As you all know, in history, rulers and power holders have established their systems first in thought. As an extension of the patriarchal system, a field of social sciences has been created, which is male, class-specific, and sexist in character. This field is in turn broken up into different parts that are torn apart from each other.

The Kurdish women's movement which has been working on jineolojî since 2011 and which has put this topic up for discussion attaches great value to the results obtained so far on this topic worldwide. It is very keen on discussing, sharing results, cooperating with and learning from all those who fight for the freedom of women.

As Kurdish women, we say, "The 21st Century will be the century of revolution of women and peoples". We believe that jineolojî will play one of the historical roles for the establishment of a liberationist mindset, for ethical and political structures and a free society that puts women's liberation at the center. We believe that by developing jineolojî and the sociology of freedom as a new social science by turning it into the ground base of our societal struggles, it will be possible to unravel 5000 year-old Gordian knots and blind spots of history that yet await discovery.

For more information about jineoljî, visit the official website: jineoloji.org

Researching the colonization history of women will require the re-writing of the history of humanity and will have an enlightening character in this way. Together with the extensive and profound evaluation of the deep enslavement of women, the solution of the ciphers of her drummed enslavement will also be possible.

jineolojî will make it possible for us to restore links between knowledge and freedom which have been torn apart from each other. For, there is an important relationship between knowledge and freedom. Knowledge requires freedom, freedom in turn requires knowledge and wisdom. The participation of the woman in societal life will be judged by her degree of freedom. The woman's desire for knowledge and freedom is also an aspiration for truth.

Truth is the first and the true form of societal nature. All which was substantial before the patriarchal system has been distorted by it. The stages of normal development in the system of natural society represent what we call truth. For this reason, jineolojî also describes the desire for these distorted truths. This effort will be combined with our quest for knowledge, wisdom, and freedom.

Important tasks await us in the 21st century: the philosophical-theoretical and scientific framework of women's liberation, the historical development of women's liberation and resistance, mutual complementary dialogues within feminist, ecological, and democratic movements, the renewed description of all social institutions (e.g. family) according to liberationist principles, the basic structures of free togetherness, the construction of an alternative understanding of social science on the basis of women's liberation. The field of a new social science for all those circles that are not part of power and the state must be built. This is the task of all anti-colonialist, anti-capitalist, anti-power movements, individuals, women. We refer to these alternative social sciences as the sociology of freedom. jineolojî can build and develop the ground base of these social sciences. It is a vanguard in this regard. It will both construct the sociology of freedom and be part of this sociology itself.

The implementation of the interpretations of these sciences has led to devastating results for nature, society and human beings: The normalization of militarism and violence, the deepening of sexism and nationalism, the unrestrained development of technology, especially weapon technology for the control of society and individuals, the destruction of nature, nuclear energy, cancerous urbanization, demographic problems, anti-ecological industrialism, Gordian knots of social issues, extreme individualization, the rise of sexist policies and practices against women, rights and freedoms that only exist on paper.

At this point, we propose jineolojî. It was observed that it is necessary to overcome the system of the dominating field of science and to construct an alternative system of science. In addition, we understood that the existing fields of the social sciences must be freed from sexism.

The term jineolojî was concretely used for the first time by the Kurdish people's representative Mr. Abdullah Öcalan in his writings from 2003 in his work "The Sociology of Freedom". Öcalan expressed that women and all individuals, societies, and peoples that are not carriers of power and the state need to develop their own and free social sciences, that these sciences could be called Sociology of Freedom, that these in turn could be based on jineolojî, because movements that aim at a free, equal, and democratic communal society have a strong need for jineolojî.

The term jineolojî means "women's science". "Jin" is Kurdish and means "woman". Logy is derived from the Greek term "logos" for knowledge. "Jin" in turn comes from the Kurdish term "Jiyan", which means "life". In the Indo-European language group and in the Middle East the words Jin, Zin or Zen, all of which mean "woman", are often synonymous with life and vitality.

In the history of humanity, the woman was evaluated as the first existence that has gained knowledge about her own self. Life and sociality were knitted on the basis of moral and political principles with the woman at the center. Natural society with its moral and

political values was built by the woman. There is an unbreakable bond between women and life. The woman represents an important part of social nature in her body and in her meaning. This is the reason for associating woman with life. The woman represents life, life symbolizes the woman. For this reason, *jineoloji* as women's science is also referred to as the science of life.

Upon closer examination of patriarchal system stages, starting with the Sumerian civilization, it is clear that the rulers, until today, have established their power positions initially in thought. For example, the distinction between subject and object for social structures was first established by the modern sciences in the minds. This fiction imposed on society that man is subject, woman is object, Mr Subject, Mrs Object, master subject, slave object, state subject, society object. This logic of power has made both women and society believe in this distinction of oppressors and the oppressed. It used mythology, philosophy, and science for this purpose. The paradigm of sexism has been built in this sense.

Knowledge structures require free discussions. But if we look at the relationship between knowledge and power, this is difficult to detect. In this context, the questioning of patriarchal, power-centered structures is necessary. Likewise, starting with an epistemology in favor of humans, women, nature, and society, there is a need for a new investigation, interpretation, renewal, and awareness. The principles, hypotheses, and results of the existing social sciences must be re-discussed and critically examined. Correct and incorrect information must be separated from each other. It is of great importance that we reach a truthful interpretation of historical society.

Today the woman also represents an entity on which a lot of policies are being made. These policies are not designed to liberate the woman or to strengthen her will. Because of these policies, the woman is more suppressed, killed in a soft or hard way that obscures her past and present. Today, knowledge and science are in the first rows of fundamental spheres of power. With the con-

from the disease of liberalism which says "Practice criticism. Tell me, how it should be. Tell me, what the solution is, but don't implement the solution, just pretend like you do". For a good, just, and beautiful life, knowledge is no longer enough. It is necessary to overcome the existing system and to build the new one beyond the limits of the old.

As women's movements and social movements that fight against the capitalist and patriarchal system, we have to go through a new phase of change and transformation. The questioning of the influence of the existing system on our thinking and our actions must be deepened. Undoubtedly, the experience, change, transformation, and renewal processes of feminist movements have paved the way to this questioning. In this sense, *jineoloji* is a result and continuation of the experiences and efforts of feminist movements. It arises as a reality, which also includes feminism. While it sets itself the goal to go one step further, it is its principle to walk on the trail of the experiences of women's movements.

There is a need to conceptualize the woman as a social reality, to define her existence according to her own reality, to explain what does not belong to her, to determine the "how" of her liberation and to express the specificities of womanhood for this purpose.

In addition, it is important not to detach knowledge and science from the social field, not to elitize, not to make them the basis of power and to keep the connections of society always strong. In natural societies before patriarchal civilization, knowledge and science were part of the ethical and political society. As long as the vital needs of society did not necessitate it, it was not possible to exploit knowledge for other ends. Together with the patriarchal civilization, women and society were robbed off of knowledge and science. Power holders and governmental forces became stronger with the help of knowledge and science. This led to the radical separation of knowledge from society, especially from the woman. *jineoloji* aims at restoring this link.

the woman is a social, historical, and integral existence that has her origin in nature, the definition of female existence requires a radical and profound change of knowledge and spirit. From the colonization history of the feminine spirit through to the economic, social, political, emotional, and physical colonization, a situating of the woman is needed. It is necessary to deepen and merge the scientific data and interpretations that have been achieved in the field of knowledge structures, psychology, physiology, anthropology, ethics, aesthetics, economics, history, politics, demographics etc., and to lead them to a scientific system. The solution of women's problem of freedom will be possible with organizations and structures based on such an extensive, integral field of knowledge and sciences.

In entire human history, women and the oppressed have resisted as actors for freedom and democracy. However, it was not possible to overcome the existing dominant system. The main problem is that the forces of freedom and democracy have failed to create a system for their freedom, equality and justice values, to historicize and to lift them out the parable of power. Systematization and historicizing need above all the construction of an alternative paradigm in mind.

For this reason, it is of great importance for us, as women's liberation movements, to create a mentality, i.e. a field of social sciences which puts women and society into the center. We need to be able to create the spirit of our alternative system. What if this does not happen? In the name of alternative, the same mental patterns, methods and instruments of the ruling system, the system itself could be repeated and reproduced again, this time on behalf of women and the oppressed.

This is another reason for jineoloji. Its goal is to decipher the paradigm of power on one hand, but on the other hand to push forward the solution. It is not enough to criticize the existing system only, to decipher the inadequacies of this field or to say what an alternative should look like. It is important to liberate oneself

stant reproduction of ideologies and policies in the areas of politics, society, economics, religion, technology, philosophy, etc., hostile to women and society, the sciences play a major role. The link between knowledge and power, together with the exclusion of ethics, has been pushed indefinitely, especially in today's age. The sexist nature of science has deepened and explained problems irresolvably, mostly in this age.

The social sciences in a general sense cover up the fact that women are a social reality. The prevailing understanding of science does not reveal all that which belongs to women, starting with her history. In describing women and their role in society, the dominant understanding of science determines statutes on the biological differences between women and men. For example, based on their ability to give birth, it is claimed that women act purely "based on emotionality". Or because of the physical attributes of men, it is alleged that violence is part of their nature. These statements are supposed to be proven by scientific concepts and experiments. In this way, women are made to play the passive role, while men are ascribed to an active role. Subjugation and violence are portrayed as belonging to the nature of humanity and are presented as insurmountable facts. Science is exploited for this purpose and the pillars of the system are thus strengthened.

To this day, many feminist researchers have done important work to point out the links between knowledge and societal sexism from different perspectives. With their work, they have shown that modern science, from the 17th century on, has a masculine language and structure. They have shown that the problem in the relationship between subject and object, as the basis of scientific knowledge, was founded on the basis of sexist metaphors from the very start. For example, they have shown us how much of modern science in the thought of Francis Bacon, who is considered to be one of the pioneers of modern science, displays a sexist attitude and language. Bacon considered the knowledge relationship between nature and human spirit really

as a relation of domination. He liked to use the patriarchal family and marriage as metaphors and he engaged in witch hunting. From the perspective of Bacon, who is responsible for the quote “knowledge is power”, reason is male, while nature is female. According to Bacon, the relationship between abstracted reason and nature, which has been discarded as soulless matter, could only be one of mastery, conquest, seduction. And so his utopia of New Atlantis consists of an island of men, who make knowledge and science the basis of their power.

In the modern understanding of knowledge the self is constructed as a controlling subject by the separation from the “other”, i.e. of nature and the feminine, while these “others” are objectified. For this reason, the “other” is controlled and put under tyranny. For example, Descartes excludes intuitive, empathic elements from science and philosophy. This expresses a masculinized understanding of science. Positivism, too, illustrates the basis of this knowledge understanding. Realities are disconnected from each other, problems are deprived of any definition, the reasons of problems are sought within current borders, historic roots are disregarded. According to this view, history is lifeless. It was lived through and has now reached its end. Moreover, positivism, which applies universal laws to society, presents the fact as the only unchangeable truth.

This sexist and biased science explains history, politics, society, economy, culture, art, aesthetics, and other topics of the social sciences according to its understanding of power. The attitude of the existing sciences towards women, nature, and all the oppressed is biased.

Women scientists, feminist movements, and academics have made important contributions with their research and critical analyses, which strengthens our work on jineolojî. Valuable work has exposed the male analysis of history. Moreover, there are women’s universities, women’s studies departments, women’s research centers around the world. It is one of the main objectives of

jineolojî to build a bridge between these important achievements. From the perspective of women, it is important to work together to build an alternative field of social sciences, to establish the system of women’s studies, to overcome the current dispersal, to strengthen scientific flow and the intersections.

The Free Women’s Movement of Kurdistan rates the 21st century as the century of women and peoples. The question of gender equality and equality for all the oppressed has never been as pressing before. A corresponding organization and the development of alternative systems and structures is inescapable. An extensive system analysis and the overcoming of sexism are in our view important goals. In this context, the Free Women’s Movement of Kurdistan suggests jineolojî both for the solution of the greatest paradoxes of our age, as well as as a method for the development of the spiritual world of women.

jineolojî presents a proposal for radical intervention in the patriarchal mindset and the patriarchal paradigm. In this sense, jineolojî is an epistemological process. The aim is the direct access to women and society in the realm of knowledge and science, which is currently controlled by the rulers. The aim is to pave the way to the roots and identity of women and society, which have been detached from their truth. Women should create their own disciplines, reach their own interpretations and meanings, and share these with the whole society.

The Kurdish women’s movement began the construction of the field of jineolojî in 2011. It is building an educational system for women and society, as well as women academies. Discussions are held on topics such as women and social sciences, women and economics, women and history, women and politics, women and demographics, feminine ethics and aesthetics.

It is necessary to scientifically express the existence of women with all its dimensions, as well as to criticize and interpret any knowledge structures relating to the history, society, nature and the universe comprehensively and systematically. Because