

Fraser, N., *Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*. London: Verso, 2013, 248 p.

Book review

The book presents the evolution of feminism from two perspectives: a historical perspective that outlines the feminist movements and feminist activism, and a theoretical perspective on feminist thinking that takes us on a journey from theories concentrated around the New Left to the dangers of neoliberalism. The book is structured around three "acts", as the author herself likes to call them, each of them representing a stage in the evolution of the feminist movement and thinking. It is interesting to point out that the book also offers an insight into the evolution of Nancy Fraser's thinking regarding feminist theory, making its way from the early feminist engagements, to the ideas and the legacy of the Frankfurt School, and to the implication of some major "poststructuralist" thinkers, such as Judith Butler and Michel Foucault.

Nancy Fraser is an American critical theorist, professor of philosophy and political science at the New School for Social Research in New York and a thinker that developed her concepts of justice from traditional feminists like Martha Fineman. She considers justice a complex concept that must be understood along three different dimensions: distribution (economic justice), recognition (social/cultural justice) and representation (political justice). Starting with the winter of 2014, Nancy Fraser will become an associate professor of gender studies at Cambridge University.

The term "feminism" has multiple uses and its meanings are most often challenged. Some authors might use the term "feminism" to refer to a political movement, while others use this term to highlight injustice that women face, or theoretical constructs in social and/or cultural studies. Even though the term "feminism" is associated to women activism from the 19th century until present, a distinction has to be made between the feminist ideas and beliefs and the feminist political movement, even if it is only because individuals already theorized the notions of justice for women before the actual political activism.

The book "*Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*" identifies the first steps that feminist thinking made from its birth to present, taking into consideration both aspects of feminism: both the historical aspect (represented by the feminist activism), as well as the theoretical aspect (represented by the evolution that feminist thinking made from theories concentrated around the New Left to the post-Westphalic position of today).

I will present briefly the structure and contents of Nancy Fraser's "*Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*", from both historical and theoretical perspectives, and then a few words on my own point of view regarding the goals that the author is trying to achieve.

"*Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis*", at first it creates the impression of being a collection of essays that hold Nancy Fraser's critical theory, but the volume is more than that. The most interesting feature of the construction of this volume is following the evolution of Nancy Fraser's thinking, because the book holds essays written from the '80 until present. Therefore, a transition can be observed from the concepts of the Frankfurt School to incorporating in her work the thoughts of Michael Foucault and Judith Butler.

The spotlight stands on the second wave of feminism that started its existence in the New Left and critical theories derived from Marxism, psycho-analysis, semiotics and other elements, its primary focus being the removal of androcentrism and sexism, which have been inherited from many social and political practices derived from the intellectual elements listed above. Nancy Fraser's point of view regarding the "second wave of feminism" compares its whole

history to a drama in three acts, each of the parts corresponding to one of the three acts, but more on this later.

First, let me specify the temporal axis the author analyses in order to define the three acts, and then I will present the contents of each act. The historical period that Nancy Fraser references starts with the "women's liberation movement" that started around the New Left, as a force of insurgency, resulted in doubting male domination in capitalist societies of the post-war era.

From a historical point of view, the first "act" presents feminists' effort to associate different radical movements with the purpose of ending the democratic society constructed around gender inequality and technicized politics. This period can be identified, according to the author herself, with the saying "the personal is political", therefore bringing forward the androcentrism of the capitalism and its attempt to transform the society from its roots. Later on, in the "second's wave of feminism", utopian aspirations disappear, and the movement makes its way towards identity politics.

From a theoretical standpoint, the first part of the book tries to merge feminist sensibility with the New Left's critique of the welfare state. This critique attacks the androcentrism of the welfare state, as well as its bureaucratic establishment, these essays putting the "second wave of feminism" in the center of the anti-capitalist battle for democratization. This section contains an extraordinary essay that compares social-democratic and state approaches to income distribution with the purpose of strengthening "family income", as well as presenting different concepts that have both positive and negative effects on women's position in society.

Analyzed at a historical level, the second act follows the evolution of transformative impulses that gave birth to a political idea outlined around the term "difference". Therefore, the transition from "redistribution" to "recognition" takes place and the feminist movement is now concentrating its attention on cultural politics. Concurrent to this period, the growth in popularity of neoliberalism declares war on social equity, the clash of these important theories gave birth to the need to revise feminist radicalism.

From a theoretical point of view, the second "act" presents feminist thinking in the process of transition from equality politics towards identity politics, concentrating its attention on solving the dilemmas that feminist movement face in a period of neoliberalism accession. Another important change that can be observed in the feminist thinking of the "second act" is moving from the "redistribution fights" to "recognition fights" even though, at the same time, feminist thinking of this period supports a non-identity version of the latter. The essay "Feminist politics in an age of recognition" is constructed around the concept of "gender justice" as Fraser names it, and it acts on two dimensions: justice of distribution (economic justice) and justice of recognition (social justice). The next essay, which is more or less a debate with Judith Butler, is constructed around the same argument. Actually, the main idea of the second part is represented by the attempt to reconcile the social-cultural and economic dimensions of the political.

The third act portrayed by Nancy Fraser, whose historical unfolding has not yet found its end, is a result of the clash presented in the previous act and is manifested by feminism's attempt to join other emancipatory forces, with the purpose of subjecting instable markets to a democratic control. Thereby, the insurgent spirit of the feminist movement is restricted on the one hand, while on the other, its beliefs are even more engrained: a poststructuralist critic of capitalism's androcentrism, systematic analysis of male domination, implementing democracy and gender-related justices.

From a theoretical standpoint, the third "act" intercepts a revitalization of feminist radicalism in an era of neoliberal crisis. Supporting a "post-Westphalic" position, the essays contained in this final part of the book "Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis" place women's emancipation battle in relation with two other social forces: on the one hand, forces that support market expansion, while on the other hand, the forces that are willing to protect societies from such influence. In an attempt to merge feminism and marketization, the essays contained in the last part of the volume "Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis" transcend this unusual alliance, making its way toward another alliance, between "emancipation" and "social protection". In this last act of the volume, "underrepresentation" is added to Nancy Fraser's list

of injustices, therefore compiling the "injustices trinity of the contemporary capitalism" - uneven distribution of resources, lack of recognition and low political representation - creating a map that the author considers essential for constructing the fundamental directions of justice in the contemporary era: economical, cultural and political.

In conclusion, Nancy Fraser's "Fortunes of Feminism. From State-managed Capitalism to Neoliberal Crisis" is a fascinating book, representing an instructive and constructive reading that shows the birth of feminism and similar movements, as well as the way these fell in the trap of neoliberalism. The volume is an accessible, pleasant read because the author defines and argues the concepts used through the book very well.

The most important weakness of the book is not represented by the criticism of the historical direction that feminism took, but the solution Fraser proposes. Its polanyan perspective fails to create a distinction between the economical and the social, which represents a source of tension in feminist politics even from its birth.

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