

right-wing women

by andrea dworkin · Language: EN

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Overview

Andrea Dworkin's "Right-Wing Women" (1983) is a powerful and provocative analysis of why some women align themselves with conservative and right-wing political movements, often those that advocate for traditional gender roles and restrict women's autonomy. Dworkin, a radical feminist, delves into the psychological and social motivations she believes drive women to embrace ideologies that, from a feminist perspective, appear to be against their own liberation. She argues that the right offers a perceived promise of protection, security, and a defined place within a patriarchal order, which can be appealing in a world that often feels chaotic and threatening.

Dworkin meticulously examines the rhetoric and policies of the right, particularly concerning issues like family, sexuality, abortion, and pornography, showing how these elements coalesce to create a framework where women are offered a sense of safety in exchange for their independence. She challenges the notion that these women are simply acting out of free choice, instead suggesting that their choices are often shaped by deep-seated fears, a desire for male approval, and an internalization of patriarchal values. The book is not merely a condemnation but an attempt to understand the complex interplay of power, gender, and political allegiance, ultimately calling for a radical re-evaluation of women's agency and the societal structures that limit it.

Key Takeaways

- Women's alignment with right-wing ideologies is often rooted in a perceived need for protection and security within a patriarchal system.
- The right offers a promise of order and traditional roles that can be appealing in a world perceived as chaotic or dangerous.
- Traditional gender roles, while offering a sense of stability, ultimately reinforce female subjugation and limit women's autonomy.
- Dworkin argues that the choices of right-wing women are shaped by internalized patriarchal values and a desire for male approval.
- The book critiques the idea that women are truly free when they choose roles that restrict their independence.
- Understanding the motivations of right-wing women requires examining the societal pressures and fears they experience.

- True women's liberation, according to Dworkin, necessitates dismantling patriarchal structures rather than seeking refuge within them.

Chapter Summaries

The Promise of Protection

Dworkin introduces her central thesis: that women are drawn to the right by a promise of protection from the perceived dangers of the world, particularly from male violence and societal chaos. She argues that this promise, while alluring, comes at the cost of women's autonomy and reinforces their subordinate position within a patriarchal structure. The right offers a defined, albeit restrictive, place for women, appealing to those seeking security and order.

The Politics of the Family

This chapter examines how the right-wing idealizes the traditional nuclear family, portraying it as a haven and the cornerstone of society. Dworkin argues that this ideal, however, is inherently patriarchal, placing women in subservient roles as wives and mothers. She deconstructs how the family unit is presented as a source of female power and fulfillment, while simultaneously limiting women's public and personal freedoms.

Pornography and the Right

Dworkin analyzes the right's stance on pornography, noting that while they often oppose it, their reasons differ significantly from radical feminists. She argues that the right's opposition is rooted in a desire to control female sexuality and maintain traditional moral codes, rather than a concern for women's degradation. This contrasts with a feminist critique that sees pornography as a tool of male dominance and objectification.

Abortion and the Right

This section explores the right-wing's anti-abortion stance, framing it as a central tenet of their ideology concerning women's roles. Dworkin contends that the anti-abortion movement, by denying women control over their reproductive lives, reinforces their status as property or vessels for reproduction. She highlights how this position aligns with the broader goal of confining women to domestic and maternal roles.

The Right-Wing Woman

Dworkin synthesizes her arguments, offering a portrait of the "right-wing woman" not as a simple victim, but as an individual making choices within a constrained system. She explores the psychological mechanisms—such as internalized misogyny and a desire for male approval—that lead women to embrace ideologies that ultimately limit their freedom. The chapter concludes by reiterating the necessity of challenging patriarchal structures for genuine women's liberation.

Themes

- Patriarchy and protection
- Female subjugation
- Internalized misogyny
- Gender roles
- Political alignment

Notable Quotes

- "The right-wing woman is a woman who has chosen to live in a world defined by male supremacy, a world in which she is protected by men, a world in which she is defined by her relationship to men." — Describing the fundamental choice and position of women who align with right-wing ideologies.
- "The promise of protection is the promise of submission." — Highlighting the inherent trade-off Dworkin perceives in the right's offer of security to women.
- "The right-wing woman is not a fool; she is a survivor." — Acknowledging the complex motivations and perceived benefits for women who make these choices, even if Dworkin disagrees with the ultimate outcome.
- "The family, as a social institution, is the primary means through which women are kept in their place." — Critiquing the traditional family structure as a tool for maintaining patriarchal control over women.
- "Pornography is not about sex; it is about power." — Explaining the radical feminist view on pornography, which contrasts with some right-wing moral objections.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is right-wing women about?

Andrea Dworkin's "Right-Wing Women" analyzes why women align with conservative movements. Dworkin argues that these women often seek protection and security within a patriarchal system, accepting traditional roles in exchange for a perceived sense of safety. The book critiques how such choices, while seemingly empowering to some, ultimately reinforce female subjugation and limit women's autonomy from a radical feminist perspective.

Is right-wing women worth reading?

Yes, "Right-Wing Women" is worth reading for anyone interested in feminist theory, political science, or gender studies. It offers a challenging and nuanced perspective on women's political choices and the complexities of patriarchal influence. Dworkin's analysis, though controversial, provides deep insights into the motivations behind women's alignment with conservative

ideologies and the societal structures that shape them.

How does right-wing women end?

Spoiler: The book concludes by reiterating that women's liberation cannot be achieved by seeking protection within patriarchal structures. Instead, Dworkin argues for a radical dismantling of these systems and a re-evaluation of women's agency. It emphasizes that true freedom requires challenging the very foundations that offer perceived security at the cost of autonomy, advocating for a revolutionary shift in how women understand and exercise power.

Who should read right-wing women?

This book is essential reading for students and scholars of feminist theory, political science, and gender studies. It is also highly relevant for anyone interested in understanding the psychology of political alignment, the dynamics of patriarchy, and the historical context of radical feminist thought. Readers who are open to challenging perspectives on gender and power will find it particularly insightful.

How long does it take to read right-wing women?

On average, it takes approximately 5 to 6 hours to read "Right-Wing Women." This estimate is based on a typical reading speed of around 250 words per minute and the book's approximate length. Individual reading times may vary depending on reading speed and engagement with the complex subject matter.

When was right-wing women published?

Andrea Dworkin's "Right-Wing Women" was first published in 1983.