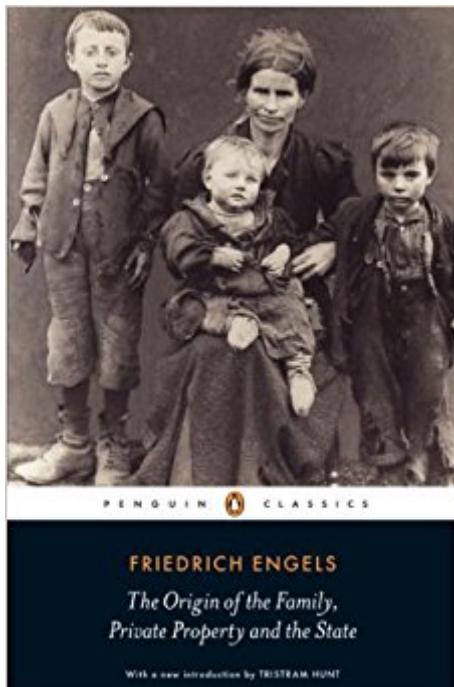


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The Origin Of The Family, Private Property And The State (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State (1884), was a provocative and profoundly influential critique of the Victorian nuclear family. Engels argued that the traditional monogamous household was in fact a recent construct, closely bound up with capitalist societies. Under this patriarchal system, women were servants and, effectively, prostitutes. Only Communism would herald the dawn of communal living and a new sexual freedom and, in turn, the role of the state would become superfluous.

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Customer Reviews

Friedrich Engels was born in 1820. In 1842 Engels went to Manchester to represent the family firm. Relationships there inspired the famous *The Condition of the Working Class in England* in 1844. Collaboration with Marx began in 1844 and in 1847 he composed the first drafts of the *Manifesto*. After Marx's death, he prepared the unfinished volumes of *Capital* for publication. He died in 1895. Dr Tristram Hunt is one of Britain's best known young historians. Educated at Cambridge and Chicago Universities, he is lecturer in British history at Queen Mary, University of London and author of several books. A leading historical broadcaster, he has authored numerous series for the BBC and Channel 4. A regular contributor to *The Times*, *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, he is a Trustee of the National Heritage Memorial Fund and Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

This modern Penguin Books edition of Engels' classic work is a must read. My only regret is that I had not read it years ago. Engels begins with an encyclopedic knowledge of antiquity, quoting from such classics as Grote's 'History of Greece' (12 vols), Mommsen's 'History of Rome' (5 vols), and Lewis Morgan's 'Ancient Society, or Researches in the Lines of Human Progress from Savagery, through Barbarism to Civilization' (now available from). Into this "supersaturated solution" of received knowledge he dips his thematic string "the origin of the family" and draws it out encrusted with crystals of known but here-to-fore unrelated information. As a long-time university teacher of ancient history I was thoroughly familiar with Engels' database but had never mined it for this particular theme. Most of modern anthropology has arisen long after Engels completed the fourth edition of this work in 1891, so he may be criticized for errors in detail and even method, but his overall message is still relevant and very important for civilization today! Born in Germany, Fredrich Engels was very well educated and seems to have been a reader of Latin and Greek, and fluent in German, French, and Russian as well as a skilled writer of English. A well-turned, if somewhat polemical example: "The downfall of Athens was not caused by democracy as the European lickspittle historians assert to flatter their princes, but by slavery, which banned the labour of free citizens." Throughout the book Engels is highly complimentary of the United States as the highest form of representative democracy in his time. But he does offer a criticism which is hard to gainsay, especially since 2008: "...the democratic republic no longer officially recognizes differences of property. Wealth here employs its power indirectly, but all the more surely. It does this in two ways: by plain corruption of officials, of which America is the classic example; and by an alliance between the government and the stock exchange, which is effected all the more easily the higher the state debt mounts ..."Prof. Peter C. Patton, Ph.D.

Puts history in perspective and shows that women have been equal participants in society in times past and gives the scientific analysis of how and why women's position in society changed to one of a second class citizen becoming slaves to our male partners. If you want to know why, then read this book and others which challenge the status quo and which point to the ways to achieve full human liberation of not just women but the entire human race.

Engles offers a review of "the Iroquois gens" is good for an interpretation of another's European version of the Iroquois. The problematic was the original author brought his own male biases to the study. Thus, he made a male dominated misspeak on what was observed. Engles did not know this. Without these observations, and Engles own biases, he developed an analysis the Iroquois system

that speaks well of organization.

I have always found Engels easier to decipher than Marx. Also, since much of this book is based on the new (in 1884) science of anthropology - a close cousin to psychology and psychiatry - I generally find it pretty easy to get my head around the concepts that he presents. It stands out really clearly in this book that he and Marx trace the origins of class society to the agricultural revolution (when human beings started raising crops and animals instead of being hunter gatherers) - which immediately resulted in a "surplus" of food - which became the responsibility of an elite (chieftains and priests) to safeguard for the winter and hard times. He also traces the necessity for men to trace their offspring once there is a surplus and they begin to accumulate wealth (the keepers of the surplus get to keep a little more of it than everyone else). Because by this time human beings have figured out how babies are made and want to bequeath their wealth to their descendants. This can only happen if they can trace their paternity, which means limiting women (but not men) to a single sexual partner. Thus the need to replace matriarchal society with patriarchy and to introduce the marriage contract to bind women to a single man. Engels then traces how this primitive "tribal" structure, eventually led to the concept of private property - and of the feudalistic state. To have a state you have to have a king or supreme leader. He maintains power via a standing army and rewards "knights" in his army with gifts of private property. And because property is no longer owned communally, people are forced off the land they used to farm and have no choice but to go and work as serfs for the knights and lords who now own the property by the king's decree. The book contains a fascinating section about the way the Iroquois Nation governed themselves - including their use of consensus in decision making, inheritance through the female line and their collective ownership of property. He also outlines how various Iroquois tribes were united in a Confederacy governed by a Federal Council (which formed the basis for state-federal structure the colonists adopted in the US Constitution). The section about democracy in ancient Athens and the coalescence of Latin tribes into a single Roman government is also extremely interesting. The final section concerns the amalgamation of the various Germanic tribes into the states of Germany and France. By Dr Stuart Jeanne Bramhall, author of **THE MOST REVOLUTIONARY ACT: MEMOIR OF AN AMERICAN REFUGEE**. regard for all members of the tribe as having an equal voice (with men and women playing an equal role in leadership), , insistence on consensus decision making, their

This classic book emphasized on the relevance of the basic unit of organization in this society, which is family. Engels argued that the formation of Family marked the start of private property

because of the hierarchy in the family per se which is primarily based on the Historical Materialism which was conceptualized by his contemporary, Karl Marx.

This book by Engels, though flawed by modern standards, is a great text for its time. It connects the development of the modern family and the subsequent oppression of women as intimately linked to the development of capitalism. The flaws in this text come from his use of Lewis Henry Morgan and the problematic notion of a universal and linear evolution of human society. Though that has been found to be anthropologically incorrect, the true value of this text and its contribution to socialist and communist thought lies in the aforementioned connection between the oppression of women and the emergence of capitalism.

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