

The Neurotic Foundations of Social Order (Psychoanalytic Crosscurrent)

J. C. Smith



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This work offers an explanation of the development of human social order in psychoanalytic terms. It examines patriarchy, aiming to uncover its inner dynamics; offers a critique of the subordination of women by men; and maintains a commitment to existing social and psychological models without sacrificing one for the other. The author argues that social order is primarily the product of neurosis and that the material conditions of life and human rationality are secondary. He believes that Western culture's male-dominated social order is the product of repression and illusion, central concepts in psychoanalytic theory, and not the result of rational thought. He sees it as continually legitimized for reasons of human material need rather than the psychological needs which actually drive it. As a result, he argues, legal and political theory and institutions take on a mythical dimension and function, divorced from the reality in which people live. The book aims to refresh and inform the debates within feminism and psychoanalytic social theory. It also embodies a useful set of references to literature on the psyche.

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