

**THE PROBLEM OF LOVE FROM SARTRE AND BEAUVOIR TO IRIGARAY**

A Thesis

by

SHAUN DOUGLAS MILLER

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2006

Major Subject: Philosophy

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Approved by:

Chair of Committee, Michael Hand  
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**ABSTRACT**

The Problem of Love from Sartre and Beauvoir to Irigaray.

(May 2006)

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The common idea of love is a fusion of the individuals into one. The idea has permeated throughout society so that it has now been taken for granted. Such an idea of fusion of two individuals is actually harmful rather than helpful. In this thesis, I will show why the fusion model is not a prime model of love that one should follow, starting with Sartre. He is the paradigmatic example of the traditional model of love going wrong. By taking the fusion model to its final culmination, love is impossible or—among other things—sodomasochistic. Beauvoir reads Sartre’s view as a bad-faith version of love. She inserts her view by giving an account of the “woman in love” which is an example of a woman under Sartre’s interpretation of love. After showing why love under Sartre cannot be true, Beauvoir states that authentic love can only happen if the individuals are equal. That way, love can have grounds for culmination and fusion. Irigaray looks at the fusion model as debunked. She sees what Sartre and Beauvoir try to do but they are still assuming major things. Irigaray states that genuine love is based on the differences—particularly sexual differences—which Sartre and Beauvoir have failed to realize. By looking at Irigaray’s account of love, the traditional fusion model is debunked and love based on differences is applauded.

*To those seeking wisdom of love, and love of wisdom.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have always thought that a major project like a thesis is just like writing another philosophy paper, except longer. Clearly I underestimated the extent of that attitude. After researching this topic, there are plenty of people whom I would consider a tremendous help with my project as well as helping my critical thinking skills. First, I would like to thank Dr. Michael Hand. His enthusiastic approach to my project has encouraged me to get this thesis finished in a timely manner. Thanks to Dr. Ted George for developing critical thinking skills pertaining to the topic by always asking the hard questions. I am still thinking about the questions. And thanks to Dr. Marian Eide for giving me a different approach to this topic and how I could further this thesis into other projects. Each of them has sacrificed their schedules and obligations in order to help me and I am grateful for it. They have worked hard with me.

My experience at Texas A&M University has been interesting. Manuela Gomez is truly a good friend. She has always given me an opportunity to speak my mind as well as share our humor together. She has given me insight into what philosophy is about: experiencing life instead of a storage facility for compiling trivia. I shall truly miss our adventures together.

Travis and Teresa Kohnert are the only friends I made in this town that were not part of the department. By explaining my ideas to non-philosophers, they asked me simple questions that I needed to take into account and they would gladly listen without critique or apathy. I was glad to have them around so that I could enjoy a break outside of the department.

My parents have given me an interesting take on relationships. Although I do not consider them to follow the traditional model of love, they also do not embrace the model of love that I argue for in the end. Their relationship has given me a base of comparison for other love relationships and I am still wondering how to frame their relationship into a model. It has given me insight to try to form my own idea of what a model of love is.

Finally, I must thank Julie. Without her, this thesis would not have been realized. She has culminated the idea that long-distance relationships are possible and this thesis is proof of that. It is also wonderful that whenever I broach her on this subject, she does not belittle, discourage, or enrage me. Indeed, she has even brought up certain philosophical questions about love that has helped me think things through and has even brought them to light in this thesis. It is ironic that whenever I sat to write this thesis, there have been times where I could not write because all I could think about was her. Her encouragement to write and finish the project has helped me become aware of our relationship and our time away from each other. The space between us truly tested our relationship. I thank Julie for her tolerance, gratitude, but most importantly, patience.

**NOMENCLATURE**

<i>An Ethics</i>	<i>An Ethics of Sexual Difference</i>
<i>BN</i>	<i>Being and Nothingness</i>
<i>ILTY</i>	<i>I Love to You</i>
<i>JTN</i>	<i>Je, Tu, Nous: Toward a Culture of Difference</i>
<i>NE</i>	<i>No Exit</i>
<i>SG</i>	<i>Sexes and Genealogies</i>
<i>Speculum</i>	<i>Speculum of the Other Woman</i>
<i>SS</i>	<i>The Second Sex</i>
<i>This Sex</i>	<i>This Sex Which is Not One</i>
<i>TBT</i>	<i>To Be Two</i>
<i>WD</i>	<i>Why Different?</i>
<i>WL</i>	<i>The Way of Love</i>
<i>WML</i>	<i>Witness to My Life</i>

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I am a man. My sex is male. This may not seem such a huge significance. Why is that? Why is it that when Beauvoir and Irigaray claim that they are woman, it makes a difference? It is because the history of philosophy has been written mostly by men. Their sex never occurred to them. Why think about one's sex when their sex has nothing to do with their philosophy? However, thanks to Beauvoir and Irigaray, the sex *does* matter.

In writing this thesis, I have come to realize that love is not immediately tied to a sexual disposition. Indeed, the typical view we receive about the philosophical aspects of love has to do with the act of sex. Why is that? I believe it is because since most of the philosophers were men, they tended to think of love tied up with coition. Love, for the masculine model, is somehow related to sex. Indeed, love is impossible without sex.

However if we look at the feminine philosophers, we see that their view of love is not tied immediately with coition. Indeed, they either see love as something that should be thought about for its own sake, or something that is contrary to coition. Yet these feminists seem to admit their bias; they will admit that being female is what drives their philosophy. Should it be considered a problem? If so, why is this a problem?

The theme of this thesis is love. I have started with the assumption of the fusion model that so permeates our society. Why did I choose this model? I believe this model

is so strongly saturated in our society, that people follow this idea dogmatically. I have also chosen this model because it has the idea of a relationship having full fruition, which has a completion in either coition (where two can become one physically) or in marriage (the two becomes one in religious, property, or State terms). However, the idea is so strong that we now view single people as culturally inferior. If the people involved do indeed get into a relationship, it is not a legitimate relationship until they are married. And if they do get married, it is not a legitimate marriage unless they have children. Now it has come to the point where the fusion model must be debunked. However, people's beliefs do not change easily. One must make another aware of the problem. It is the purpose of this thesis to make others acknowledge the problems in hopes for, as Irigaray would say, a community of love.

The relationship among Sartre, Beauvoir, and Irigaray is hardly mentioned when it comes to love. Although there have been many articles expediting Sartre's view of love, there have virtually been no references to Beauvoir's or Irigaray's view of it. By analyzing love from the feminists' point of view, I hope that as a male, a heterosexual male living in the 21<sup>st</sup> Western century, I can find a new love without resorting to the fusion model.

In chapter II, I consider Jean-Paul Sartre's view of love. He looks at the fusion model and finds this view impossible. He states that love cannot come to fruition because it will only lead to sadomasochism, hate, desire, or indifference. Instead of love being complete as in the fusion model, Sartre views lovers as an ongoing circle where both individuals trade their dominance and submission to each other.

By looking at our facticity and transcendence, loving someone means that we can only love another object. However, we do not want to love someone as an object; we want to love a subject. Through Sartrean metaphysics, this cannot be done. I give an analysis of Sartre's view with his metaphysics and determine that there is love is impossible, or at least it leads to sadomasochism, indifference, or hatred. I will primarily look at *Being and Nothingness* but also look at his play *No Exit* because one can apply his philosophy and see how the dynamics of love are played out. Why did I choose Sartre? I choose him because he is the paradigm example of love being impossible. I wanted to see impossible love to show that the reason it is impossible is because Sartre may be saying something different, but he is holding on to the rubric of fusion. He is still finding a way to make the lovers the same. I also chose Sartre because I wanted to show that the fusion model is debunked and Sartre is the paradigmatic example of showing that.

In chapter III, I turn to Simone de Beauvoir because she is in the same tradition as Sartre: existentialism. As such, she would be a great source for a dialogue with Sartre when she states that love is possible. I have also chosen Beauvoir because she is a link for my next chapter on Irigaray with a tie to feminism.

Looking at Sartre's and Beauvoir's personal life, one can see that they had an intense love affair. By showing that they have thought of their love life differently, Beauvoir looks at Sartre's view and she states that it is a bad faith version of love. She then explicates authentic love. Before delving forward, she explains woman's plight in our history and explains how and why women have been considered the submissive sex.

After reasoning that it cannot be biological, it must be a social matter on how and why women have become oppressed. I show that Beauvoir's "woman in love" is an application of Sartre's bad-faith view of love: the woman is always submissive to her man and gives her transcendence to him. He however, can do anything he wants to do but she is always serving him. If he leaves, he can move on. She, however, cannot do so because she has already dedicated her life to him. She has become an object of fascination for him but she only loves him because he is a man, and loving is her goal: any man will do.

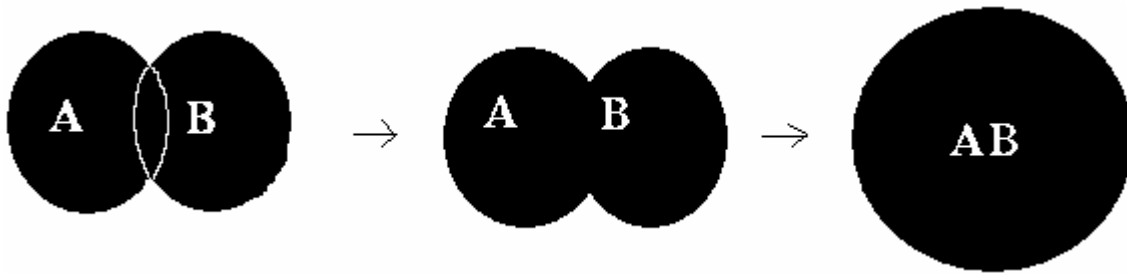
Beauvoir's authentic version of love is by two mutual liberties (subjectivities) coming together. This means that females should not be passive and sit idly. They must be active and demand equal socio-economic status in history. The female must become equal with the male for there to be true liberation in society. From there, authentic love is possible. My focus will be on *The Second Sex*, particularly the chapter entitled "The Woman in Love."

Finally, in chapter IV, I turn to Luce Irigaray. She finds Beauvoir's view phallogentric: Beauvoir is stating that for women to be equal to men, they must *be* like men. Irigaray's critique is that socio-economic standards are not enough. There must be something else that needs to be taken into consideration and that is sexual difference.

After a look at what Irigaray means by sexual difference, along with a brief understanding of Lacan, I apply this to Irigaray's notion of love. There is also some concern about Irigaray being labeled as an "essentialist" and heading toward a heteronormative stance. I will show that this is a misinterpretation of her works and that

sexual difference does not mean biological or gender differences. I will be focusing her earlier works (*Speculum of the Other Woman*, *This Sex Which is Not One*, *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*) to get a foundational base of what she means by sexual difference. I will then focus on her later works (*To Be Two*, *The Way of Love*, *I Love to You*, *je, tu, nous*) that deals with the topic of love.

An important thing to distinguish Irigaray from the previous philosophers is that she is not engaged in a fusion of the couple. She is not for it (i.e. Beauvoir) or against it (i.e. Sartre). Rather, she does not want to be part of the fusion debate at all. She looks at both sides of the debate and claims that both sides are missing something (sexual difference) and that they have many assumptions. For both sides, they are assuming that love can only happen (1) under a unification of the individuals, (2) if the individuals are equal, and (3) under a pre-existing framework of the metaphysics of the Same. In the end, Irigaray argues that a fusion is possible, but one would not want that anyways because it leads to Sartrean sadomasochism. In fact, one would not want love *qua* union at all. Irigaray does not want to be part of the heritage of the fusion model as Sartre and Beauvoir have. The idea is not to fix the problem by not entering the debate of the fusion model; rather it is to offer a new model where there is no rubric of fusion at all. Genuine love for Irigaray means that the lovers have to be *different* which is a key element to her notion of sexual difference. The model of love that we often see in our society is shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: The Traditional Model.** As the lovers begin overlap, they eventually fuse and then become one identity. The two becomes one.

Why love? Philosophers often engage in questions that deal with meaning: God, ethics, or simply life. No one, however, talks about relationships with other people, particularly love. Ironically, love is considered one of the most important things we consider for a meaningful life and relationship. If it is so meaningful, why is there not much dialogue about it? The objective of this thesis is to have a dialogue with these philosophers about love and what the outcome is. In the end, I aim to dispel the fusion model and aim for a love of difference.

## CHAPTER II

### SARTRE

Two becomes one. Such is the idea in love. Is it truly ontologically possible? The idea that individuals in love can become one is nice, but the individuals can *never* become one. These individuals come from very different backgrounds and personalities. There can never be a fitting because our “edges” never correspond to another’s “edges.” The “fitting” cannot happen without friction or grinding. We can never form a coherent and seamless unity. We tend to think of the individual demanding self-assertion, self-definition. But love demands a mutual self, a shared self: it is a mutual and shared definition. This rubric is continued in the early philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, especially in his play *No Exit*. Although Sartre does not state that love is possible, he follows the heritage of the tradition by affirming the fusion of the lovers. Yet Sartre replies to the tradition in arguing that love cannot work for the concept of individuals coming into a mutual entity is impossible.

Before I investigate Sartre’s view of love, I will need to mention Hegel because Hegel was a major influence on Sartre, particularly with the views on the Lord/Bondsman relationship. Even though Sartre’s view of the master/servitude dialectic may not coincide with Hegel’s, Sartre’s new master/servitude dialectic does have some insight on the dynamics of relationships.

To start from Hegel, I gain simple consciousness of objects in the world (e.g. houses and trees). There is an awareness that these objects are distinct from each other. In order to get full consciousness, one must negate and destroy the other things it comes



across. We want to prove our independence. Through this, self-consciousness completes itself. It comes to see itself having an awareness of reality, albeit a rudimentary form of it.

With desire, we are gratified by mastering and overcoming the objects. After all, we “devour” food; “demolish” things such as paper, cans, and boxes; and we “dominate” and tame the animals. Through this, we satisfy our desires by overcoming the objects we come across, by mastering the objects by annihilating their existence by destroying them. Our goal is to master the objects around us.

For a non-rudimentary version of self-consciousness, one must encounter another self-consciousness, for that would give each self-consciousness recognition of itself through each other. “Self-consciousness exists in and for itself when, and by the fact that, it so exists for another; that is, it exists only in being *acknowledged*.”<sup>2</sup> I see the other and see what she has that I do not have. What the other has is my non-being. It is reflected back to me and I see the non-I in the other. In other words, the best I can do is only *be* conscious of you, I do not *have* you. “Self-consciousness is faced by another self-consciousness; it has come *out of itself*. This has a twofold significance: first, it has lost itself, for it finds itself as an *other* being; secondly, in doing so it has superseded the other, for it does not see the other as an essential being, but in the other sees its own self.”<sup>3</sup> To use Sartrean terms, I see you as a body and that is the only thing that I can ever come across. I can never come across your mind; I can never come across your subjective “I”. Thus, you and I recognize ourselves *mutually recognizing* each other.

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<sup>2</sup> Hegel, 111. My emphasis.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

Trouble looms however. If this is what consciousness does naturally, what do we do when we encounter another consciousness that tries to cancel me out “[f]or the other is equally independent and self-contained”?<sup>4</sup> I do not want to be negated. More than this, I lose my ego in confrontation in another, but I see it myself reflected in the other. Thus, I must do what I have been doing to other objects: I must desire, master, and negate this other self-consciousness. In other words, we seek the death of the other. However, the other is also trying to master, negate, and seek the death of me. We try to cancel the other out. This struggle is nothing but each consciousness seeking “to assert its own selfhood by killing the other.”<sup>5</sup> It is the struggle unto death as Hegel puts it. In doing this, I am risking my life and the other is also risking hers.<sup>6</sup> The point though, is not only to defeat the other, but to make the other acknowledge and realize that she has been defeated and negated by me. What I desire is not only mastering the other, but to have the other recognize my mastery.

Could there be a compromise of sorts? Why not have the two self-consciousnesses recognize each other’s individuality and leave it at that? The answer is that if there is a compromise, then there is also a giving up. There is an ontological loss if I concede to the Other. Even showing signs of wanting a compromise puts me in a weaker position where the Other can dominate me. Giving up means I must make room for you: my space, my awareness.

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>5</sup> Lavine, 220.

<sup>6</sup> An excellent analogy is the American Declaration of Independence where America did not become independent by claiming that it itself was independent, but by risking its life which thus brought a *recognition* of its independence.

There is a drawback however. “[T]he self-conscious ego wants to eliminate the other in order to establish its own independence. But if it succeeds in this it will be eliminating itself, because the other *is* itself (i.e., the source of its selfhood).”<sup>7</sup> If I truly kill the other, the relationship is destroyed. I no longer have control and mastery of the other because she is dead. Thus, I must preserve her in a sense. “I need to have the other self exist in order to be conscious of my own selfhood. I require, in order to become conscious of my being a self, that another self recognize me as a self, look at me as a self.”<sup>8</sup> I then see that I am and am not the other because we recognize each other mutually recognizing each other. Thus, I cannot become aware of myself unless there is an other that can recognize me, that is “as another self serves as a mirror for us.”<sup>9</sup> There is then an existential dependence on the Other because the Other serves as a mirror for me. It is ironic how I depend on the Other to get a conception of my self as well as submitting myself to the Other.

This will be best exemplified in Sartre’s play *No Exit*. We use people as mirrors because they tell us what we look like and in the play, Inez must serve as a mirror for Estelle when she is applying make-up to herself since there are no mirrors in hell. Estelle is worried that since there are no mirrors around, she does not know how she looks as others look at her. After the make-up is applied, Estelle asks how does it look, after all, how is Estelle’s taste similar to Inez’s taste?

ESTELLE: But how can I rely upon your taste? Is it the same as my taste? . . .

INEZ: I *have* your taste, by dear, because I like you so much. . . Am I not nicer

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<sup>7</sup> Rauch, 89.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

than your glass?

ESTELLE: Oh, I don't know. You scare me rather. My reflection in the glass never did that; of course, I knew it so well. Like something I had tamed . . . I'm going to smile, and my smile will sink down into your pupils, and heaven knows what it will become. [. . .]

INEZ: I'm your lark-mirror, my dear, and you can't escape me . . . There isn't any pimple, not a trace of one. So what about it? Suppose the mirror started telling lies? Or suppose I covered my eyes—as he is doing [Garcin]—and refused to look at you, all that loveliness of yours would be wasted on the desert air. No, don't be afraid, I can't help looking at you, I shan't turn my eyes away. And I'll be nice to you, ever so nice. Only you must be nice to me, too.

ESTELLE: Are you really—attracted by me?

INEZ: Very much indeed.

ESTELLE: . . . But I wish he'd [Garcin] notice me, too.

INEZ: Of course! Because he's a Man! [*To Garcin*] You've won.<sup>10</sup>

The recognition is from the Other because we see ourselves in the Other. In the play, Inez will provide a sense of self for Estelle.

I cannot kill the Other, for I would lose myself through the loss of the Other. I lose the recognition that I am the master. Also, if the Other is dead, I have no other self to recognize me as a self. I have no other self to be the mirror for me which tells me that I am a self being recognized. I cannot fully realize who I am if I remain by myself in nature. The only way I can gain proper consciousness of myself is when my self-understanding is recognized and confirmed by others. Thus, "I know I am a self because I see you looking at me, responding to me, as a self. It is clear, then, that consciousness of my own existence requires the existence of another self."<sup>11</sup>

Death of the other, then, would in a sense kill my self as well. Thus, I must let the other live. However, I must still show my mastery over her. I must show that I am

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<sup>10</sup> *NE*, 21-22.

<sup>11</sup> Rauch, 89.

the victor. Hence, I preserve the other's life, but I still show "who's boss" by making her do things for me. If she refuses, I threaten death to her. In this sense, I have preferred self-consciousness and freedom instead of life; the other, on the other hand, prefers life to self-consciousness. The other fears death which in turn becomes the servant. "Spared by the master, it [the slave] is preserved as a thing is preserved. It recognizes the master, but it is not recognized by him."<sup>12</sup> The Other, then, is my servant. In this way, I have control over the servant and servant must learn to accept this. The servant's actions are now my actions "for what the bondsman does is really the action of the lord."<sup>13</sup>

Contradictions arise however. Eventually, I realize that I need the servant. I cannot do things on my own anymore. Why would I need to do anything? I have a servant to do things for me. Thus, I become dependant on the servant. Another loss that I have received is that my original plan was to fight the Other in order to make the Other recognize me. What is the point of a mere servant recognizing me? I do not have recognition; I simply have a "yes-man" on my hands. "The master is master only because he is recognized by the slave; his autonomy depends on the mediation of another self-consciousness, that of the slave. Thus his independence is completely relative."<sup>14</sup> We started off as equals, and now "the master finds that the recognition he is getting is *not* from an equal. Recognition from an equal is the only recognition worth having, and he cannot have it, because he has made the slave his inferior."<sup>15</sup> This is not

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<sup>12</sup> Hyppolite, 171.

<sup>13</sup> Hegel, 116.

<sup>14</sup> Hyppolite, 173.

<sup>15</sup> Rauch, 98.

another self, but has been reduced to a thing, an object; and I do not want another object as my mirror of my self, only an other self can do that. The servant, on the other hand, learns how to make things. The servant can do things by herself. Even though I am still, in a sense, in control, the servant has learned to make and control things. In a sense, the servant will realize that she has put work into this object. But as a result, my sense of selfhood suffers. “Instead of the truth of self-certainty, he is aware that in receiving recognition from someone who is now his inferior, his own consciousness and action are now unessential and ungentle. The victory is hollow.”<sup>16</sup>

What the servant gains is control of the outcome in a sense. Since I am stuck and in a sense, stagnant, the only way to move forward is through the servant. Only through the servant can we move forward and complete this whole dialectical process. Thus for Hegel, “[i]f history must be complete, if absolute knowledge must be possible, it is only the slave who can do it, by attaining satisfaction. And that is why Hegel says that the ‘truth’ (revealed reality) of the master is the slave. The human ideal, born in the master, can be realized and revealed, can become *Wahrheit* (truth), only in and by slavery.”<sup>17</sup> The truth comes through the servant. “[T]he slave will invent history, but only after the master has made humanity possible.”<sup>18</sup>

The problems from Hegel are eventually solved. Eventually, the servant will reach the capacity to reason in which it realizes that it is part of a unity but also realizes that there are different individuals. Consciousnesses can be shared through their

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Kojève, 56.

<sup>18</sup> Kelly, 174.

language, history and culture. It works its way to the end where consciousness reaches the most complete and robust form of conscious life where it takes on a manner of knowing: Absolute Knowledge, the final form of conscious life. It is with Absolute Knowledge where everything is complete and an end, a telos to consciousness. But what shall we think of this ending? Is it too optimistic? Sartre seems to think so: there are two forms of optimism that Sartre accuses Hegel of committing. Sartre sees Hegel's view only for self-consciousness and reinterprets it for human existence. Let me now switch to Sartre's view to see how his view of consciousness (and other people, for that matter) are different from Hegel, yet there is a sense that there are obvious influences from Hegel.

For Sartre, his problem comes down to existential freedom. We see ourselves in our own facticity (what we are) as opposed to our transcendence (what we would like to be). We can define ourselves and what we want to become. However, when other people enter the picture, we are always changing our lives for them. Other people want us to behave and act a certain way. Thus, we define ourselves not just to our own terms, but to other people's terms as well. We are thrown into this new existence and redefine ourselves according to the new people around us. We redefine ourselves according to people whom we admire, whom we identify with, and even people we despise. As the Other sees me, he judges me, puts labels on me, categorizes me, and thereby limits me. It is "the look" as Sartre puts it because with this look, the Other casts my transcendence into a transcended facticity. I become a "transcendence-transcended." My being-in-the-world is given to the Other through the look. Through the look, my possible projects

cease; my possible projects are a “subtle death.” In this sense, I am aware of my own body as other people perceive it. I become fully aware of myself only when I am aware that I am there as another object for someone else. Yet, this is different from Hegel. For Sartre, he carries the Cartesian sense of a distinction between the body (or as Sartre puts it, Being-in-itself) and consciousness (being-for-itself). However, there is a third category that we must consider: other people. I may be conscious of myself just by being aware of other things being distinct from me, but “I become *fully* self-conscious. . . by becoming aware that I am in object, an active body, for someone else’s perception—only when I become aware that I am being looked at.”<sup>19</sup> By being looked at (say through a keyhole, for example, as Sartre did), we feel embarrassed when we are caught. And when we are embarrassed, we are self-conscious. These relationships with these new people are not being-*with*-Others, but being-*for*-Others. We are not *with* other people; we are *for* them. This look reduces me to an object for the Other. The Other sees me as body, a thing in the world. In other words, I gain self-consciousness by objectifying myself. But I recognize this objectification through the eyes of other people. By being looked at, I am no longer master of the situation. The Other has control and limits my freedom because the Other sees me, makes predictions, judging me, and putting labels on me. I am not what I am, because the Other has made me. The Other destroys my freedom and negates me by her look. I am possessed by her. An example is from *No Exit* where there are some moments where one can see certain ways where the self is given to the Other where the Other manipulates *us*, thus limiting our

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<sup>19</sup> Lavine, 376. Her emphasis.



freedom. Starting with Garcin himself, he seems to be getting along well at the beginning of the play. In fact, he later states in the play that he would rather live alone<sup>20</sup> than to have company. However, Inez enters and now it is Inez and Garcin sizing each other up. Even at the beginning of their introduction, Inez mentions how grotesque Garcin's mouth is: it twitches so.<sup>21</sup> Here, one could see the revolting humanness from Inez' point of view. Taken from the main character's point of view from another of Sartre's work *Nausea*, the human bodily existence is nauseating. It comes to the point where as soon as something is pointed out to you (either by "the look" or some verbalization) then one becomes aware<sup>22</sup> of oneself as an object.

Thus, I am just another object in the world of the Other. I must defend myself: I then try to turn the Other into an object: I must negate my objectification by objectifying the Other. I try to possess the other by making her an object: her in-itself becomes part of my experience because I can only encounter her as a body, never across her subjectivity. Likewise, she can only see my body and never come across my subjectivity. By this, I look back at her where I steal her subjectivity, her freedom simply by staring.<sup>23</sup> This new conflict then becomes a struggle for my sense of my own freedom, and the sense of my self by another person; I want the Other to recognize my freedom, but the Other has expectations, different plans, or desires me to do something

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<sup>20</sup> *NE*, 9.

<sup>21</sup> *NE*, 9.

<sup>22</sup> Indeed, Garcin even states that he was not aware of it until Inez mentioned something. (9)

<sup>23</sup> A good way to see this is that I am the center of my world and objects (including people) are around the center. Like a swirling black hole, I consume everything much like Hegel's desire. Other people are the center of their world and I am not in the center of their world. The conflict comes because the Other takes away my meaning for myself and replaces it with another meaning. I do this to other people as well.

else. In a sense, the Other restricts and interferes with my opinions of myself. Thus, recognition is frustrated.

So when it comes to love, I see the Other and realize that the Other has being-for-itself. This means that the Other also has freedom. Yet, to maintain our freedom, we can only do so at the expense of capturing the Other's freedom. If I love the person, I limit the Other's freedom. Likewise, if the Other loves me, then I lose my freedom as well. For Sartre, one must wonder why anyone would want to give up their freedom. Indeed, Ortega y Gasset claims that love is surrendering the self to another.<sup>24</sup> This is what love does: it objectifies the Other not by taking away her freedom (by killing the Other), but by capturing it, which makes her into a slave and obviously (despite what wishful thinking one wants to have) we do not want a slave for a lover; we want the Other to have some selfhood, some freedom. After all, I want the Other to love me *freely*. How can the other love me *freely* if I have possessed her freedom? What I want to do is to possess not the Other as a thing, but as a free person, as a consciousness. But as soon as I do that, I have possession of her freedom, which is no longer love. How could the Other love me if I have control over her? “[H]ow can the beloved be a free person if I possess and enslave her freedom?”<sup>25</sup>

On the other hand, if I give the Other freedom, I have lost possession of the Other. Hence, I will lose the ontological safety of my mastery over her. The Other must proclaim a certain restriction on what one can do to master me (“if you loved me, you’d

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<sup>24</sup> Ortega y Gasset, 188. In fact, he says that the love is unwilling, because willing means that the lover is still considering whether she is in love or not. If that is the case, then that person is not really in love.

<sup>25</sup> Lavine, 380.

do what I want”). And since we cannot bear to lose our love, we are willing to do a tradeoff in order to keep our love. Freedom is a price we pay to fall in love, yet we cannot love unless we have freedom. The contradiction lies in wanting the Other to be a free *consciousness* since I want the Other to view me objectively; but I do not want the Other to have a *free* consciousness because I want to rule her freedom. It is the paradox of two becoming one, but still trying to remain two<sup>26</sup>: no one can be free and possessed.

However, the drawback is that we do not want the Other to have *too much* individuality; likewise, the Other does not want to give us *too much* individuality. In other words, the lover and the beloved do not want to give too much *freedom* to one another. By capturing the Other’s freedom, I want to enslave the Other as free because only this will satisfy me. However, if she is free, she will escape my possession of him. When this happens, I have lost mastery over the Other. The balance of freedom and love is instable.

Think of friendship. With friends, we are thrown into a situation where we just happen to be with friends with him or her. However, contrary to popular belief, we do not become friends because we happen to like him or her which is the common way of looking at friendship; we are friends with him or her in order to get a conception of ourselves. We then form a partnership. With friends, we have as many as we want. In fact, we may use the word “friend” in a promiscuous way (we call someone our friend because we met them once, or our friend is friends with him or her). Our friends define us. Since we have many friends, our identity is spread out to many and we do not

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<sup>26</sup> Although for Sartre, it is more like two individuals grinding their “edges” to “fit” into one.

depend on one friend on how we think of ourselves. For lovers, it is different because in our society, we think of lovers as an exclusive partnership. For Sartre, this cannot work. We want to expand our identity and options by having as many lovers as possible because our freedom would be limited if we restricted ourselves to just one person.

Love is not a selfless act; love is a *seduction to manipulate/dominate the Other* because to control the Other, to master and possess the Other, we use modes of seduction. Think of the beginning of a relationship or even a first date. Our thinking is not based on having a good time with the Other, but rather how can I *win* the Other. We can do this by surrendering ourselves to the Other as a roundabout way of possessing the Other. It is an impression act. We act in order to get the Other to think of us in a certain way. In turn, the Other does the same. We ask certain questions (where did you go to school? what do you study?) not to get to know the Other, but to find new openings, to find new ways to present ourselves which *appeals* to the Other. I try to make myself into a fascinating object. Our weapons are not to kill each other to the death; rather, our weapons are “the look”, certain vocabularies, and the caress. We can see this again in *No Exit* when Garcin and Estelle start to make love, Inez jumps in and questions Garcin if Estelle really loves him. After all, Estelle wants a man but she will say anything to get that man. At the same time, Garcin feels like a coward and he wants some reassurance that he is not a coward. But how can he be sure that when Estelle is telling him that he is not a coward, is she really telling the truth, or is that something that he just wants to hear so that she can get what she wants?

INEZ: And you, Estelle, do you like cowards?

ESTELLE: If you knew how little I care! Coward or hero, it's all one

provided he kisses well. [. . .] [To Garcin] Why trouble what those men are thinking? They'll die off one by one. Forget them. There's only me, now.

GARCIN: But *they* won't forget *me*, not they! They'll die, but others will come after them to carry on the legend. I've left my fate in their hands.<sup>27</sup>

But after a while, Sartre's problem with love is that we must give up our freedom and take away the Other's freedom in order to create this new self. It is an unsuccessful attempt at dominating the Other, while the Other unsuccessfully attempts to dominate us. By surrendering herself to me, she has already self-destructed her freedom and has become my slave. Yet this is not what I want because I want to be loved by a freedom. We cannot completely give up our individuality to create this new self, we want some aspects of individuality too. After all, I want to be a fascinating subject, not a fascinating object. How can we do this? For it is a contradiction to be free and possessed at the same time as well as possessing her freedom and identity. For Sartre, love—and more importantly, sexual desire—is taking away the Other's subjectivity and transcending it into objectivity. Ironically, the Other consents to this. As with Hegel, there is a “struggle unto death” where there are obvious master-servitude themes except for Sartre there is no end. As Lavine puts it, “the conflict between master and slave is a no-win game”<sup>28</sup> for Sartre. What can we do? We cannot kill the Other for we would lose the Other as a mirror to ourselves who would then lose our being-for-others. On top of that, I would also lose the satisfaction of enslaving the Other. Possibly, once the

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<sup>27</sup> *NE*, 39-40. This also suggests that even after we are dead, we still want people to think good of us. We are defined by our actions, but after our actions stop, our bodies and memories belong to other people.

One could also see how Estelle *wants* to forget about her earthly life so she wants Garcin to help her by stating convincing/manipulating Garcin into thinking that she is a worthwhile project to go after. Estelle commands Garcin to pay attention by stating she does not want *any* man; she's wants Garcin (p. 35) which is another manipulating ploy.

<sup>28</sup> Lavine, 379.

Other *realizes* that she is a slave, she will rebel and struggle to regain her freedom which will result in a conflict to which we start over again. What does Sartre then conclude?

Love is an impossibility.

First, how can the other obtain subjectivity and objectivity at the same time?

Second, how can one have individuality but still have a shared self? That's a contradiction in terms. To share a self is to give up one's freedom. Indeed, Sartre makes the claim that love—and all relationships—are just conflict. Why try to reach the ideal shared sense of self in love if that ideal is impossible? Even if one strives for it, it is all conflict.

Love is really a device to make the other people love us. Because fascination is a transcending project, we would rather *be* loved than *to* love. However, I cannot force the Other to love me. Even if I could, it would not be a *free* love. The best I could do is make the Other think of me in impressionable terms: I manipulate the Other by hiding my subjectivity by making her believe that I am a fascinating object. This fails, however: once I have become an object, my objectivity has no meaning for me. I have already lost my freedom by making myself objectified. Once again, we can see it in *No Exit* when Estelle enters the play. Immediately we can tell that Inez is attracted to Estelle. Sartre wants to point out that winning the Other is a way to manipulate the Other. Inez wants to manipulate Estelle into thinking that Inez is actually a favorable person as a person, lover, and possibly as a woman. At this point, Inez puts up a form of seduction to win Estelle: Inez flirts with Estelle. Through this process, Inez' project is to consume Estelle, to make Estelle love her. However, Estelle does not even notice her:

INEZ: You're very pretty. I wish we'd had some flowers to welcome you with.

ESTELLE: Flowers? Yes, I loved flowers. Only they'd fade so quickly here, wouldn't they? It's so stuffy. . .

Estelle does not even realize what Inez is doing; Estelle cannot see the flirtation which makes Inez' project frustrated. Inez can only give up (which would entail that love fails) or flirt "harder" which would be to increase the seduction level. However, she loses (because Garcin "wins"<sup>29</sup>) and so her project has failed.

Another reason for failure is that if my seduction works, the Other will then treat me as an object and can never get beyond that. In *No Exit*, Garcin gets his reassurance from Estelle and they proceed to love each other, until Inez gets in the way:

INEZ: That's right! That's right! Trust away! She wants a man—that far you can trust her—she wants a man's arm round her waist, a man's smell, a man's eyes glowing with desire. And that's all she wants. She'd assure you you were God Almighty if she thought it would give you pleasure.

GARCIN: Estelle, is this true? Answer me. Is it true?

ESTELLE: What do you expect me to say? . . . I'd love you just the same, even if you were a coward. Isn't that enough?<sup>30</sup>

Of course for Garcin, it is not enough. He really wants to believe that he is not a coward. Indeed, Garcin will love anyone who says that he is brave in a much similar vain how Estelle will say anything just to get a man.

In a way, "I love you" means "I want you to love me." "I want you to love me" means "I want you to want me to love you" and the cycle continues on. Love is a contradiction: we cannot be free and possessed simultaneously for that would be an in-

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<sup>29</sup> *NE*, 22. It is interesting that Garcin "pretends" to ignore Estelle's statement about her wish that Garcin would pay attention to her. Even Garcin cannot be indifferent (for how could you pretend to ignore something?); Estelle's actions were to catch Garcin's attention.

<sup>30</sup> *NE*, 39-41. Ironically, Estelle earlier states that Garcin did refuse to fight (37).

itself-for-itself or as Sartre puts it, “a desire to be God.” I want to “ground my existence” in a solid way. To do this, I must give my life meaning and I do this by giving my meaning onto another person. Yet, I also want to be free, but both of these are impossible. I am a hostage to the Other’s view of me, but at the same time I do everything I can to control that view. I want someone to affirm me and make my life meaningful. At the same time, we go through a period of bad faith because we do not (momentarily?) realize that the other person is trying to find meaning too. In an attempt to find love, all I find are people trying to make their lives meaningful through me. By giving our freedom to the Other, we would like to hear what we *want* to hear:

GARCIN: . . . Well, Estelle, am I a coward?

ESTELLE: How can I say? Don’t be so unreasonable, darling. I can’t put myself in your skin. You must decide that for yourself.

GARCIN [*wearily*]: I can’t decide.

Of course Estelle cannot truly know whether Garcin is a coward or not, but Garcin wants to *hear* that he is not a coward. He cannot simply tell her to tell him that he is not a coward, otherwise that would defeat the purpose of knowing what the Other already knows what one wants to hear.

Love, then, becomes a strategy, a struggle for self-identity, and never a “merging” of selfs between the self and the Other to form a new self. If the Other feels like his freedom is threatened, I quickly transcend into an object so that I am no threat to the Other’s freedom. Me-as-object now has a meaning for her. I give her meaning because I “hold a secret: the secret to what the Other is.”<sup>31</sup> However, I *am* an object. By

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<sup>31</sup> Cf. *BN*, 475.



my seducing, I have lost my freedom. The tables have turned and I have become her slave.

Love—or relationships—are bound to fail, because they lead to five things. First masochism: I transcend myself into an object for the Other and suffer for it by letting the Other enslave me. When Inez attracts Estelle once more, Estelle claims that she will not fall for Inez' tricks, and besides, Estelle is a muddied soul:

INEZ: Come to me, Estelle. You shall be whatever you like: a glancing stream, a muddy stream. And deep down in my eyes you'll see yourself just as you want to be.<sup>32</sup>

It also fails because my lover does not want an object for a lover. By recognizing that I am the slave, I rebel viciously to recover my freedom back. For this to truly work, I force the Other to look at me as an object, by making her transcendence focus on me. But it does not work because I cannot force someone to be free. By letting myself become flesh, the Other helps to realize my facticity by using me as nothing more. As an object, I must know everything I can to fascinate the Other, but that is impossible. Thus, masochism ends in failure.

The second is sadism: I am the master and have control of the Other through threats and violence, thus I turn the Other into an object. I refuse to be incarnated and I try to capture the Other's facticity. I want no reciprocity for I want immediate appropriation of the Other. I want the Obscene which is an ungracefulness. I do this by taking away her grace. Grace, for Sartre, is the body appearing "as a psychic being in

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<sup>32</sup> *NE*, 35.

situation.”<sup>33</sup> The body orients itself toward the future by doing movements that gives meaning from previous movements. It is an elegant movement and it appears natural with its environment. The supreme test of gracefulness is the nude body where the subtle movements of the nude hide the exposed flesh. By making the other obscene, I strip her actions away from grace and treat her as an instrument. By taking away grace, there is a break in the elegance and the flesh suddenly appears where the parts of the body are not part of the totality, but instead isolated folds of flesh. Revealing the flesh makes her transcend her transcendence by making her mechanical. However, it fails as well because I do not want an object for a lover. I command the Other, but it is not enough for *me* to treat her like this. I want the Other to treat *herself* like this too. I want her to see herself as flesh the way I see her as flesh. I want her to see herself as object, as a transcendence-transcended. This fails because even if the Other “breaks down” and does recognize me the way I want her to, she “breaks” because she chose to do so at that time. It was not my choice for her to choose freely to deny her own freedom. With sadism, I want to appropriate the Other’s freedom. But even she must consent to that. She can freely choose to give up her freedom, but that was what I wanted in the beginning. I wanted to capture her freedom by using her as an instrument, but the more I do this, the more freedom escapes from me. How so? The Other can also give me “the look.” By looking at me, I know that she still has freedom. Thus, I have not captured her freedom completely. As we shall see, sadism can turn into desire. Sadism is hopeless because I appropriate the Other’s flesh but I treat it as simply an object.

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<sup>33</sup> *BN*, 519.

The third is indifference. I try to eliminate the subjectivity of the Other. But it also fails because we can never be indifferent to a previous lover no matter how hard we try. Even if never again speak to a previous lover, the memories are still there and the personality and actions of the self are partly due to the outcome from the previous lover. I am what I have become *because* of her and I cannot ignore that fact. I cannot pretend to be a solipsist. Indeed, even if we could treat other people as if they were objects in the world, we eventually get sucked into their vortex of subjectivity. Their look threatens me without me knowing it. Even when Garcin suggests that each character stays in their respective corner and treat each other indifferently, it fails because someone must break the silence.<sup>34</sup> That person will always be significant and cannot go back into the realm of “the rest of the people.” I cannot be indifferent even when I try to ignore the Other. Again, the play is a good example:

INEZ: To forget about the others? How utterly absurd! I *feel* you there, in every pore. Your silence clamors in my ears. You can nail up your mouth, cut your tongue out—but you can’t prevent your *being there*. Can you stop your thoughts? I hear them ticking away like a clock, tick-tock, tick-tock, and I’m certain you hear mine. It’s all very well skulking on your sofa, but you’re everywhere, and every sound comes to me soiled, because you’ve intercepted it on its way. Why, you’ve even stolen my face; you know it and I don’t! And what about her, about Estelle? You’ve stolen her from me, too; if she and I were alone do you suppose she’d treat me as she does? No.<sup>35</sup>

In the same vain, Estelle and Garcin are about to make love while Inez is watching.

Estelle tells Garcin to simply ignore her because Inez is nothing<sup>36</sup>, yet Garcin cannot

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<sup>34</sup> *NE*, 18. Interestingly enough, the broken silence is a song by Inez which would suggest that one must keep oneself occupied in order to ignore Others.

<sup>35</sup> *NE*, 23.

<sup>36</sup> *NE*, 36. As if it was not more complex, it could be argued that Estelle is simply letting Garcin do his will partly because she wants a man, but also because she *knows* that Inez is watching.

because he needs Inez to convince her that he is not a coward. By Others looking at me, I am led to anxiety and the only way to escape anxiety is to treat the Other into an instrument, thus destroying indifference toward the Other.

The fourth is hatred. By having a robust concern of the Other, it smothers the Other. I am no longer a lover, but have become a paternalistic being that always watches out for the Other. But because of this, the Other starts to resent me. But hatred fails too because even though we may want to harm or kill the Other, we would not be able to recover our own being. For hatred, we do not wish to have a union with the Other. I do not just hate her freedom, but just the simple fact of her existing makes me hate her. However, what my underlying plan is to not only seek the death of the Other, but to seek out my for-itself totally free from Others. Yet this fails. Even by killing all Others, they survive in my memory as someone whose subjectivity I could not subjugate. Even if my being-for-others is eliminated, I would still be known eternally as a being-that-had-been-for-others.

The fifth and last feature is sexual desire. This is almost sadism but there are more implications with sexual desire. However, this could be applied to sadism. For sexual desire, Sartre views the caress as the weapon for incarnating the Other into flesh. Much like seduction, the caress makes the Other a “transcendence-transcended.” With sexual desire, my original attempt is to get hold of the Other’s subjectivity in her objectivity. I can do this through the caress. Language is to seduction what the caress is to sex. What this means is that when I experience something, I experience my body as an extension of my consciousness. I use this to achieve certain goals (writing with my

pen, walking to the grocery store, selecting certain tools). In sexual desire, however, I experience my body as a “tingling-mass of sensations, sensations which I savor in the way a gourmet savors fine food.”<sup>37</sup> Thus, I do not experience my body as an instrument in sexual desire; I experience it as “pure facticity.”

In sexual desire, there is a “clogging of consciousness.” In particular, when I desire the Other’s body, I am allowing myself to be “swallowed up in” my own body. I cannot annihilate my facticity into future projections. I “trouble” my consciousness by making it muddy which makes it no longer flying toward the future. Consciousness chooses itself as body. I make myself flesh—facticity—in the presence of the Other in order to appropriate the Other’s flesh—her facticity. By doing this, I can incarnate the Other by the caress, by means of seducing the Other. Through incarnation, I have transcended her transcendence: consciousness makes itself body. However, the caress is a double feature which applies to me too for “the caress is not a simple stroking; it is a *shaping*.”<sup>38</sup> I have transcended my transcendence by desiring the Other’s body and as a result, our consciousnesses are muddied because my physical sensation invades my consciousness. My goal for the caress is to make her aware of her body as what I have done with my body: make her aware of her body as “pure facticity.”

Through the incarnation, we make each other “all object,” by caressing the objects which are most fleshy and least free: breasts, thighs, stomach, buttocks. The Other does this to me as well which furthers my incarnation. Thus, *caressing spirals individuals into an ongoing objectification*. Possession is a double reciprocal

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<sup>37</sup> Lee, 515.

<sup>38</sup> BN, 506.

incarnation; it is a mutual seduction. I must incarnate myself because to make the Other sexually desire me, I must offer myself to the Other something which is non-threatening, meaningful, and an object of gratification: in short, I must become an object so that I may be in a position to possess the Other, I can then grasp her freedom while her body is being transcended. Yet through this objectification, my own desires grow as a result of the caress (both mine and hers) which reduces my freedom. Because of this, I now view the Other as an object of lust rather than as a freedom to be captured as I originally planned.<sup>39</sup> Thus, sexual desire is doomed to failure in the same reasons as love does because sexual activities means deriving pleasure for one's own *body* and/or appropriating the Other's body. My original plan was to grasp the Other's freedom through the caress. But because the caress incarnates her consciousness into an objective facticity, I cannot ensnare her freedom within this facticity. "Such is the impossible ideal of desire: to possess the Other's transcendence as pure transcendence and at the same time as *body*. . ."<sup>40</sup> For example, "we" may have a "mutual" desire for a completion of orgasm or ejaculation, but when "we" are finished, I am left with nothing except embracing an object. The failure of desire can lead to either sadism or masochism. Thus, all "normal" sexual activity is sado-masochistic because it oscillates between sadism and masochism. So in love, I want to capture a *person's* freedom; in sex, I want to focus on the person's *body* and gain possession of it. Yet I am also body

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<sup>39</sup> *BN*, "To be sure, I can *grasp* the Other, grab hold of him, knock him down. I can, providing I have the power, compel him to perform this or that act, to say certain words. But everything happens as if I wished to get hold of a man who runs away and leaves only his coat in my hands. It is the coat, it is the outer shell which I possess. I shall never get hold of more than a body, a psychic object in the midst of the world" (511). His emphasis.

<sup>40</sup> *BN*, 512. His emphasis.

confronting a body. And because she is all body, all object, “she escapes me with *all* her transcendence. . . what I take in my hands is *something else* than what I wanted to take.”<sup>41</sup> Love ends up in conflict and throughout the cycle, love goes through these stages. It may go through all of them, perhaps just one of them, but Sartre’s point is that love leads to disastrous results where at least someone’s freedom is limited. Is there an ordering that the lover and beloved goes through? No. As Sartre states, “[e]verything which may be said of me in my relations with the Other applies to him as well.” It is completely arbitrary which attitude we examine first. We should not confuse this by thinking that love has first priority over other relations. Each attitude is the very being of the for-itself.

In the end, we do not get the reconciliation as we get from Hegel. Why is this? For Hegel, the self reaches to a higher level where everything is resolved. What if there is no possibility of reaching this higher level? It seems that if we are stuck at the simpler level, it is *there* that we see definitive characterization of the self. While Hegel may have his synthesis, “Sartre sees the conflicts that underlie the encounter as *irreconcilable*.”<sup>42</sup> This irreconcilableness comes from the fact that the dialectic is not going anywhere. It just goes in circles. As Rauch puts it:

In a nutshell, according to Sartre, we can state Hegel’s view as follows: The statement “I am I” is a tautology, with all content drained out of it; but in actuality it is not a tautology at all: first, because the two occurrences of “I” have different meanings (as subject and object), although their reference is the same; second, because the statement must involve mediating intervention of another

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<sup>41</sup> *BN*, 517. His emphasis.

<sup>42</sup> Rauch, 140. My emphasis.

self, so that I arrive at my self-consciousness via the self-consciousness of another.<sup>43</sup>

For Sartre, Hegel uses this to explain what is going on through cognitive terms, but he should have used ontological or in terms of being or reality. From the point of view of the self-consciousness, it is not a form of knowing but a form of being.

What does Sartre say about the telos of Hegel? Does human history finally a purpose in which we are aiming toward? Or is this just folly? Sartre certainly claims that there can be no reconciliation in the end. Sartre's teacher, Kojève, states that according to Hegel, "history will be completed at the moment when the synthesis of master and the slave is realized."<sup>44</sup> Yet, Kojève does say that the slave has a better understanding of the nothing because of fear of death.<sup>45</sup> Thus, the servant internalizes death all the time. Over time, the servant realizes this and begins to risk his life. With this, the servant develops and is disciplined while the master is soft. And since the nothing is the foundation of Being, the slave "understands himself, understands man, better than the master does."<sup>46</sup> It is through this that the servant realizes this and understands that it is he that will complete history, and not the master. But Sartre does not see this: there is no reconciliation between two self-consciousnesses let alone all of human history. To see this, it is worth quoting from Sartre:

These two attempts which I am are opposed to one another. Each attempt is the death of the other; that is, the failure of the one motivates the adoption of the other. Thus *there is no dialectic for my relations toward the Other but rather a circle*—although each attempt is enriched by the failure of the other. . . . But it should be noted that at the very core of the one the other remains always present,

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 140-141.

<sup>44</sup> Kojève, 54.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*



precisely because neither of the two can be held without contradiction. Better yet, each of them is in the other and endangers the death of the other. *Thus we can never get outside the circle.*<sup>47</sup>

Indeed, it is again reminded where Inez tells Garcin that she will catch Estelle, to Garcin's reply: "You won't catch anything. We're chasing after each other, round and round in a vicious circle."<sup>48</sup> There will never be a merging of subjectivities; it will always be power struggles. The model of Sartre is detailed in Figure 2. We can see that there is an ongoing game in Sartre's model. The arrows indicate that there is no stopping point and the lovers are always unstable riddled with conflict.

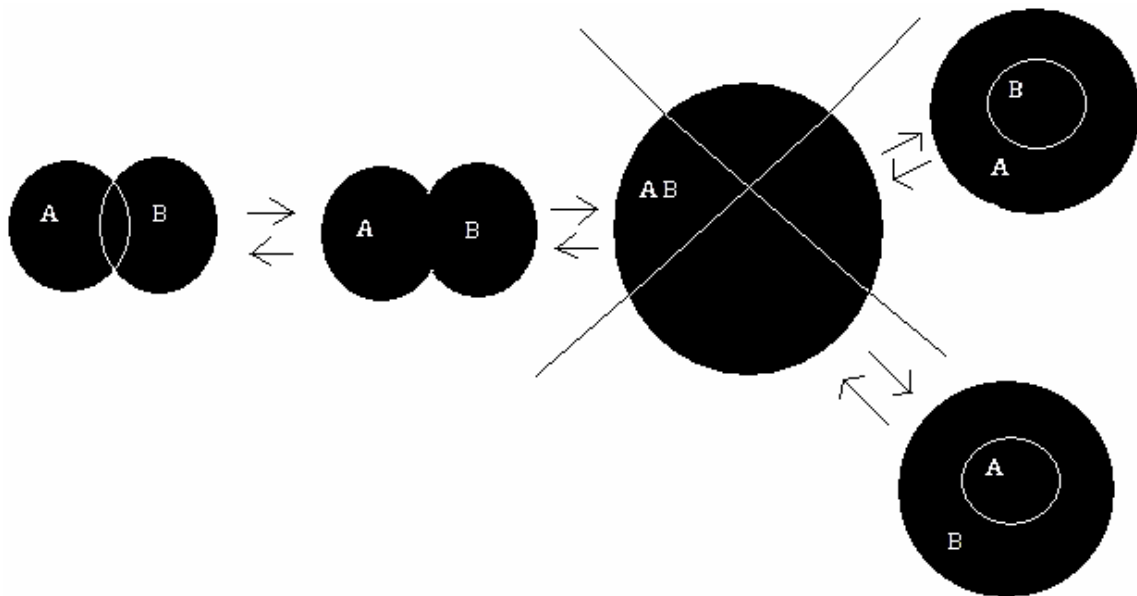
Thus, there is always a switching back and forth between myself and the Other. There is no ending, no agreement for when "I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the other, the Other seeks to enslave me. . . the following descriptions of concrete behavior must therefore be envisaged within the perspective of *conflict*. Conflict is the original meaning of being-for-others."<sup>49</sup> Thus there is never any *mutual* recognition. Recognition is always a never-ending battle.

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<sup>47</sup> *BN*, 474. My emphasis.

<sup>48</sup> *NE*, 31. As the play progresses, we can see how Garcin is at first a slave to Estelle—he would do anything as long as he hears that he is not a coward—which renders him under her control. The turning point is where Garcin wants to get out of the room because both women disgust him. Estelle then begs Garcin not to go, promising never to speak again—by doing anything as long as Garcin will not leave her.

<sup>49</sup> *BN*, 474-475. His emphasis.



**Figure 2: The Sartrean Model.** Sartre follows the traditional model until the point where it becomes full fusion: there cannot be a full fusion because the two can never become one. After this realization, the lover must subsume the Other.

For love in particular,

Sartre seems to render Hegel's analysis more relevant by casting what appears to be the same master-slave dialectic in the context of sexual relations. While the subject of Hegel's analysis seems ambiguous, or at least problematic—World-Spirit in general, or individual consciousness, or perhaps only precivilized individual consciousness—Sartre addresses himself explicitly to any and all sexual relationships. According to Sartre's reading of the master-slave dialectic in the context of sexual relationships, however, conflict is not only genetically fundamental to the structure of human relationships: it is final and irreconcilable. Sexual love is a project doomed to failure.<sup>50</sup>

In the end, Sartre seems to have the upper hand where there is no goal to love and it is forever doomed to failure. Is there a way out? Sartre claims that we can never have a consistent attitude toward the Other unless the Other is both subject and object

<sup>50</sup> Ogilvy, 201.

simultaneously, “as transcendence-transcending and as transcendence-transcended”<sup>51</sup> which is essentially impossible for Sartre. Is there a way where we can look at each other as both subject and object simultaneously? In the next chapter, I am going to investigate Simone de Beauvoir’s work and see how we can get out of a conflictual relationship.

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<sup>51</sup> *BN*, 529.

### CHAPTER III

#### BEAUVOIR

So much for a relationship under Sartre's guide. Even if there was a possibility of a loving relationship, it would end up in sadism or masochism, which is not what we tend to think love is. Sartre's metaphysics define being in such a way that love is impossible. Yet, there is a strange irony that marks some differences between Sartre's philosophy and Sartre's life.

In his War Diaries, he has mentioned to Beauvoir that they are "one." He mentions a fusion: ". . . it seemed as though as I was telling you my every thought, or rather that you were thinking it along with me. . . I was imagining two consciousnesses melted into one. . ." <sup>52</sup> We could see a progression where Sartre loves Beauvoir—starting with someone who is not him in 1937 <sup>53</sup>, to where she has become "my dear little you who are me" in 1939. <sup>54</sup> Again the message is that Sartre did feel love for Beauvoir: "I love you, you who are me [*vous autre moi*], most passionately;" <sup>55</sup> "I love you with all my might, my little heart, you are me, you are my life;" <sup>56</sup> "I love you with all my heart, *and we two are one.*" <sup>57</sup> The fusion ideology has made Sartre and Beauvoir think of themselves as a "we". Is it possible that when Sartre wrote *Being and Nothingness* in 1943 he changed his mind on love? Either way, the irony is that the philosopher of bad faith perpetrates it. However, there have been many controversies surrounding the

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<sup>52</sup> *WML*, 122.

<sup>53</sup> *WML*, 122.

<sup>54</sup> *WML*, 501

<sup>55</sup> *WML*, 252.

<sup>56</sup> *WML*, 369.

<sup>57</sup> *WML*, 274. My emphasis.

personal lives of Sartre and Beauvoir. The common story is that Sartre made a pact with Beauvoir claiming that they were to be “essential” loves to each other but they were able to experience contingent lovers. If that is the case—and we can see from history that they indeed did have many lovers from both individuals—that it looks they did keep their pact and they remained together until their deaths. There has been some controversy about this pact<sup>58</sup>, but the point is that the private love lives of Sartre and Beauvoir were deeply complex where the lovers involved former students, trios, and transatlantic relations. Perhaps there will always be something that shall remain unknown in history about their private lives. Nevertheless, the “we” that they did share seems to follow that they had an essential “we” and had occasional contingent “we’s” throughout their lives. The fusion holds for the essential couple for they died as a “we”.

At any rate, Sartre claims that love is an absolute but is made relative by Others.<sup>59</sup> The first question is why must love be an absolute? Making love into an absolute has the drawback of trying to meet that standard. If the relationship cannot meet that standard, then it is not love. Thus, Sartre makes a huge metaphysical assumption about love in general by taking it to be an ideal impossibility.

In what ways does Beauvoir respond to Sartre’s view? Through existentialism, there are two types of being that I mentioned in my second chapter: for-itself and in-itself. The former involves intentionality while the latter does not. However, Pilardi offers new insight to these beings: they are gendered. Sartre has assumed that the

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<sup>58</sup> See Fullbrook and Fullbrook where they claim that it was actually Beauvoir who wanted to be more promiscuous than Sartre, but kept it hidden from a 1930’s atmosphere. See especially p. 71.

<sup>59</sup> “In the third place love is an absolute which is perpetually *made relative* by others” *BN*, 491. His emphasis.

individuals involved in love—on any relationship—are gender-free. In other words, they are androgynous beings. In a way this is understandable: proceeding from the *Cogito*, one must also doubt one's gender. Beauvoir, however, cannot do that. From the *Cogito*, doubting one's gender may make one see oneself as a neutered being which means gender is irrelevant. But simply making it irrelevant still takes man as the absolute human type. The term "man" is used to identify and designate humans in general. So from the *Cogito*, there is already a male bias. Beauvoir cannot ignore her senses and her phenomenological weight of being a woman.

While Beauvoir may agree that Sartre's description of love and sexual desire is true, her response is that this is bad-faith<sup>60</sup> love. Indeed, Morgan claims that following a path of patriarchal love means to love is a life of inauthenticity and even a "moral evil."<sup>61</sup> Beauvoir finds Sartre making a universal description on love where it should not be done. Since he is making two concepts contradict each other—absolute freedom and absolute being—then love would obviously fail. Sartre sets up his definition so that love is inversely proportional to Being. Beauvoir counters this by stating that we do not have absolute freedom and absolute being. To replace absolute freedom, Beauvoir calls it a "situation." To replace absolute being, Beauvoir calls it "ambiguity." They will both be explained later in this chapter.

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<sup>60</sup> Bad faith is taken from Sartre in *BN*, particularly 86-116. In general, bad faith is a kind of self-deception. We do so by subscribing totally and exclusively to facticity or transcendence. In pop jargon, it would be considered of being a hypocrite.

<sup>61</sup> Morgan, 401.

Beauvoir asserts that the relationships between men and women were part of a “primordial *Mitsein*”<sup>62</sup> which, against Sartre, relationships are not necessarily riddled with conflict. Through the Hegelian master-servitude dialectic, Beauvoir sees that this is how people recognize the other through a mutual recognition. Against Sartre however, Beauvoir believes that this is possible.<sup>63</sup> While Beauvoir sees this reciprocal relationship as a way for recognition, there is still a gendered aspect which makes one sex have authority of the dialectic than the other: “She opposes him with neither hostile silence of nature nor the hard requirement of a reciprocal recognition; through a unique privilege she is a conscious being and yet it seems possible to possess her in the flesh. Thanks to her, there is a means for escaping that implacable dialectic of master and slave which has its source in the reciprocity that exists between free being.”<sup>64</sup> From this passage, the person in the master-servitude dialectic is male. Females do not have recognition. This does not mean that man is the master and woman is the slave. Woman is not part of the dialectic which entails that only men can be masters or slaves. Because man is the essential consciousness with respect to woman, men’s relationships has been made to be more absolute. It is because man has the power, he is and has always been “the defining Subject” while woman “is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, he is the Absolute—she is the Other.”<sup>65</sup> Thus woman is the absolute Other. Man

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<sup>62</sup> *SS*, xxv. Beauvoir also mentions that “[t]he couple is a fundamental unity with its two halves riveted together,” and on another page, she states that “the couple is an original *Mitsein*” (*SS*, 35).

<sup>63</sup> *SS*, 140. “It is possible to rise above this conflict if each individual freely recognizes the other, each regarding himself and the other simultaneously as object and as subject in a reciprocal manner.”

<sup>64</sup> *SS*, 140-1.

<sup>65</sup> *SS*, xxii.

compels woman to be an object—dooming her to immanence which makes her into the Other. It is because of this that in *The Second Sex* “woman was a transcendence, forced to be an immanence by a patriarchal society.”<sup>66</sup> Because of this, whenever women behave in a transcendent way, they are regarded as unfeminine. Consciousness is gendered in this patriarchal society because man and woman cannot recognize each other through a Hegelian dialectic. The “process” freezes thus resulting no reciprocity, no recognition. Through this perspective, males have been associated with the moving transcendence while females have been associated with the static immanence. It is because of this patriarchal society that men describe the world from their point of view, but confuse it with the absolute truth.<sup>67</sup>

For Beauvoir, the genuine erotic experience displays an ambiguity of the for-itself, as both subject *and* object for another. However, this will not work under the patriarchal system because the female will always experience the self as Other, as object. Her erotic experience has always been an experience of passivity, of immanence. This is because women are alienated from their bodies through objectification, pregnancy, and menstruation.<sup>68</sup> Thus, she is frustrated to be an active individual. Indeed, she cannot *be* and have individuality because to be an Other is to lose individuality and become a General. She is a cultural object where she is not an individual female but is considered as “the group of women.” Yet the female self does not have solidarity like the Jews or the African-Americans do according to Beauvoir. The females live with the males and

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<sup>66</sup> Pilardi, 2.

<sup>67</sup> SS, 143.

<sup>68</sup> SS, 62.



so their only solidarity is *with* and *through* men. Because woman cannot live without man, her loving him is an entrapment.<sup>69</sup>

How do we escape the captivity of love? As an existentialist, Beauvoir claims that women choose to be held in captivity, but they can choose to get out. Getting out is not so simple however. In the *Justifications* section of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir describes the reasons why women follow certain paths as a way of justifying their behavior. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be focusing on chapter XXIII: “The Woman in Love.” In that chapter, Beauvoir points out what would happen if Sartre was right about love. Beauvoir shows that this chapter is an application of Sartre’s philosophy toward a woman in love.

In it, being in love is an irresistible ploy devised by men such that happiness for women is recognized as part of a man. Through love, woman embraces her immanence. Beauvoir states that even the word “love” has a different sense for both sexes.<sup>70</sup> Through this, both sexes experience love differently as well. According to Beauvoir, men see love as a way to possess the woman. There has never been an instance where the man objectifies himself for the sake of the woman. Indeed, bringing back the sadomasochistic terms from Sartre, Beauvoir would argue that sadism and masochism are not gender-neutral terms: sadism is usually reserved for the males and masochism is

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<sup>69</sup> Indeed, one can see compare this to Firestone’s *The Dialectic of Sex*, NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003. Although Beauvoir wrote almost two decades earlier than Firestone, the agreement between the two is vast. They both agree that love is a male invention devised to entrap the women in the house. As long as the woman is in love, she is happy and is willing to be enslaved as long as she has the love because love reinforces the patriarchal hegemony. Eventually, the same outcome for Beauvoir and Firestone is that love must be based on mutual equality which comes through women becoming independent and being part of the active social scene.

<sup>70</sup> SS, 642.

usually reserved for the females. However, the woman idealizes love to the point where she sees her beloved as an absolute god. She tries to find herself in a man in order to justify herself, give her a sense of meaning, and a sense of being. She is alienated in her man—the absolute Subject—by totally sacrificing herself to him. Even if the man does fall in love, he is still the absolute Subject and his whole goal is possession, whereas the woman’s goal is to be possessed. Since her life will forever be dependent on someone, she might as well serve this god rather than to obey “tyrants—parents, husband, or protector.”<sup>71</sup> Thus, woman sees love as a religion, as a necessity in order to survive on her own. Because man makes love mechanical, he really seeks domination more than fusion and reciprocity.<sup>72</sup> “For Beauvoir, desire and the sexual union is not a sadomasochistic dialectic, but is more of a merging with the other. . .”<sup>73</sup> But once this union is broken—because of him—he still retains his subjectivity while the woman swirls more so into objectivity. Ironically, woman lets herself be possessed, to be dominated, to become another object through man’s eyes because since man is a god, he can give her absolute value. She does so because her destiny is marriage, which means to subordinate herself to her man because the man is her economic and social foundation.

“A woman passionately in love usually strives to unite with a sovereign subject to whom she has attributed the highest value. If she effaces herself totally before him, her attitude of love shifts to masochism. Like Sartre, Beauvoir emphasizes that the other

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<sup>71</sup> *SS*, 643.

<sup>72</sup> Man sees love mechanical because he asks questions after lovemaking: Was it enough? You want more? Was it good? The idea of asking these questions separates the act of love into an operation of mechanics. Cf. *SS*, 397.

<sup>73</sup> Gothlin, 88.

wishes to be the primary object for her beloved, his absolute aim, that towards which he directs himself, for which he transcends himself.”<sup>74</sup> Unlike Sartre, however, she has been submissive in this relationship and her individuality in the first place. She must do what she can to hold on to that love.

Part of the woman’s project, which is to love a man, makes her an empty individual: she eventually becomes deranged, delusional, and annoying.<sup>75</sup> She may, at the beginning of her adolescence, identify herself as part of the male group in order to be accepted. When society shuns that attitude, she gives up and realizes that in order to become part of their masculinity; she seeks to have one of them in love with her. What is interesting on this account is that she wants the identification of some masculinity so that she can be accepted. All men share the attribute of masculinity. Therefore, she “is in love with man in general”<sup>76</sup> and not an individual male.

She does have standards on what to accept as a suitable lover: he must be superior to her. Even if she has found someone “inferior” to her, she degrades her self to the point that the man can be superior to her. She gives her future to him, thus giving her transcendence to him as well. In this light, “falling in love and being loved by a superior being come to be seen as a desirable and liberating way of acquiring identity and access to power.”<sup>77</sup> Indeed, it is why a woman falls in love in order to get an identity. She does so to overcome her erotic passivity.

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<sup>74</sup> Lundgren-Gothlin, 200.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Mussett, 139.

<sup>76</sup> SS, 643.

<sup>77</sup> Morgan, 396.

As soon as the woman is locked into love, it is very difficult to escape because of financial and psychological reasons. She cannot leave because she does not have the resources to live on her own, nor does she want to be lonely. Her livelihood, her existence, her very meaning is enslaved to her lover, her master, her god. She relinquishes her independence knowingly with the knowledge of the male loving her. As long as the male loves her then she can yield.<sup>78</sup> She does so by being an object of seduction, by being passive, thus perpetuating her objectivity. The man will not relinquish his transcendence because he wants to remain active. But because man has the woman, he can get rid of her easily with indifference. He does not allow himself to be possessed by her. It is she who suffers from the loss. Until a reciprocal relationship happens, man does not need the reciprocity that woman demands. He can survive on his own without love. “On the day when it will be possible for woman to love not in her weakness but in her strength, not to escape herself but to find herself, not to abase herself but to assert herself—on that day love will become for her, as for man, a source of life and not of mortal danger.”<sup>79</sup>

So for Beauvoir, the typical love—the Sartrean view of love—for a woman leads to masochism. It is masochistic because if she does lose him, she blames herself; she has put all of her values onto him. Losing him would mean losing all of her values and self-worth. She does not revolt against him when in love, but rather she revolts against herself.<sup>80</sup> When she starts to lose him, she sees herself as an object that is not lovable.

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<sup>78</sup> SS, 648.

<sup>79</sup> SS, 669.

<sup>80</sup> SS, 651.

She cannot satisfy him or make him happy. She relinquishes herself in order to have the fused union whereas the man—since he is Absolute—needs no union for he remains forever independent; “she longs to *melt* with him into one.”<sup>81</sup> Since she has alienated herself in her man, which means she has become dependent on him, by his being there, his *seeing* her; then by losing him, by lacking him, she loses herself.<sup>82</sup> She becomes dependent on him because she learns that she cannot be happy unless she is loved. She will wait for this love. Beauvoir mentions the common fairy tales that portray this waiting-for-love: Snow White, Sleeping Beauty, Cinderella. These characters submit to their idea of love while the man goes off on adventures, being active while she passively waits.<sup>83</sup> And after the man has taken her love, he has won. “So for the lover the act of love is conquest, victory.”<sup>84</sup>

She can only gain value by bonding herself with a man. “For woman love is a supreme effort to survive by accepting the dependence to which she is condemned. . .”<sup>85</sup> What can she do? It is a blind faith in love and a blind obedience to her lover. Because of her loss of individuality and independence, she has forgotten her self in order to fuse with the essential subject. “The supreme goal of human love, as of mystical love, is identification with the loved one.”<sup>86</sup> She wishes for fusion, a unification, or to go back to the primordial *Mitsein*. Yet this unification is one-sided: she merges into him. She

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<sup>81</sup> *SS*, 397. My emphasis.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Lundgren-Gothlin, 201.

<sup>83</sup> *SS*, 291.

<sup>84</sup> *SS*, 375.

<sup>85</sup> *SS*, 668.

<sup>86</sup> *SS*, 653.

has lost her self *into* him.<sup>87</sup> For every woman in love, “she is another incarnation of her loved one, his reflection, his double: she is *he*. She lets her own world collapse in contingency, for she really lives in his.”<sup>88</sup> There is no shared equaled self here: “when he says ‘we,’ she is associated and identified with *him*.”<sup>89</sup> So there may be a chance to say that they become “one”, but it is the man who swallows up her transcendence while the man remains unaffected. She lives through him through his transcendence vicariously.

A way out is for man to see himself as non-absolute and woman to start seeing herself as absolute. Bergoffen looks at Beauvoir and interprets that “[t]he conditions of the couple require that men, against the patriarchal myth, be recognized as contingent, and that women, in opposition to patriarchal gendering, be recognized as transcendent. These conditions, if realized, would undo the power of the modern romantic myth.”<sup>90</sup>

Yet a strange thing happens: the woman later realizes that he is not God; he is a man. How, they will ask, can they not see an absolute value in her lover and realize that he is flawed? How can her idol be mediocre? How can her lover—the absolute being that she has chosen to give over her entire being—be flawed? This is no longer a god for he has fallen, but he is not a man either. “A fallen god is not a man: he is a

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<sup>87</sup> “The woman in love tries to see with his eyes; she reads the books he reads, prefers the pictures and the music he prefers; she is interested only in the landscapes she see with him, in the ideas that come from him; she adopts his friendships, his enmities, his opinions; when she questions herself, it is his reply she tries to hear; she wants to have in her lungs the air he has already breathed. . .” (SS, 653).

<sup>88</sup> SS, 653. Her emphasis.

<sup>89</sup> SS, 653. My emphasis.

<sup>90</sup> Bergoffen, 199.

fraud. . .”.<sup>91</sup> She must choose between her fallen idol or herself, but it is a dilemma: “[i]f she wins the game, she destroys her idol; if she loses it, she loses herself. There is no salvation.”<sup>92</sup> Love, in a patriarchal culture, is a snare for a woman.

She feels duped into thinking that he was the “one and only” for her and her alone but he is also a flawed human. Thus, the woman in love is always tormented. So much for the woman in love. How can we get out of this? Through a Beauvoirian analysis, she points out to Sartre that his view of love makes the woman in love hysterical. The woman in love is not what authentic love is. Indeed, Beauvoir questions Sartre’s view of love as sexually neutral.

The man’s wants are limited. As soon as he has obtained what he wants, he is satisfied. However, the woman has no limits to her devotion. She continually gives, even by transferring her transcendence onto him in order to preserve it. However, she cannot be happy because she wishes to possess the man, but that is impossible because

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<sup>91</sup> *SS*, 655.

<sup>92</sup> *SS*, 666. Another way to look at this is to see Paule’s character in Beauvoir’s novel, *The Mandarins*. We can see that the greater the object of love, the emptier the lover. In the novel, Paule is the “woman in love” and Henri is her lover. The woman in love loses her sense of integrity and freedom and we can see this happening to Paule when she not only loses herself in Henri, but when she eventually loses him she slips into irrationality and insanity. Despite all that, she would still devote herself to Henri even after they have already broken up and he has a new lover. It’s worth to quote from Mussett’s essay:

Once a promising singer, she gave up pursuing such a career in order to devote herself more fully to her love of Henri. Dabbling in writing throughout the story, she never devotes herself with any passion and admits that she only engages in such projects for Henri. Paule often makes references to the total unity between her and Henri and the eternal nature of their love. She explains to Anne, “[F]undamentally, we’re one single being. I used to feel it often; in fact, I clearly remember my first awareness of it. I was almost terrified; it’s strange, you know, to lose yourself absolutely in another. But how rewarding it is when you find the other in yourself” (1954, 178; [1956] 1999, 195). Despite the distance that grows between Henri and Paule throughout the book (leading to their eventual break and Paule’s plunge into derangement) Paule continues to insist that nothing is amiss and whatever tensions they have are cosmetic, rather than foundational. Even after their split and Henri’s choice of Josette as a partner, Paule insists on continuing to sacrifice herself to her absolute. (Mussett, 147, brackets are hers).

he is free and a free being cannot be possessed. Because the woman gives herself to the man, she wants the man to give himself to her. Instead, the woman gives herself, and the man simply takes. Because of woman's fear of being single, she engages in erotomania—where love becomes something greater than life itself. Thus the divineness of love.

Even if there is some sort of mutual love there is a difference of attitude. The man is capable of justifying himself without her, whereas the woman sees man necessary to her. Since the man does not see her as a necessary being, the woman is tortured, sees herself as a burden rather than a beloved. It seems as if women find love more important than man and man experiences love for the fulfillment of satisfaction and desire of his subjectivity through this objectified Other.

Indeed, through her jealousy of other women, the beloved cannot make friends with other females for the fear of her lover looking at her friends. It is because of this “she must either give up making love a religion or give up loving. This is a radical catastrophe and no wonder the woman in love, suspicious and mistaken in turn, is obsessed by the desire to discover the fatal truth and the fear that she will.”<sup>93</sup> And from here, the man is quick to leave but she, in order to keep him, must suppress her pride to become gentle and passive again. Her manipulation by deception keeps her man, but for the price of her freedom. She then becomes a seductress by becoming the woman that he wishes to encounter and possess. But it is no use: there is no reciprocity in this system because he receives pleasure through her, but he can *give* pleasure to her as well.

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<sup>93</sup> SS, 664.



She has no say on gaining pleasure. If the man is not satisfied, she becomes blames herself. Either way, she has no say in her pleasures or it is her fault.

However Beauvoir states that love *is* possible where both sexes will not be dominant upon the other. For Beauvoir, “[a]n authentic love should assume the contingency of the other; that is to say, his lacks, his limitations, and his basic gratuitousness.”<sup>94</sup> We must see each other not as absolute beings, but as ambiguity. Beauvoir brings in the notion of ambiguity: we are both subject and object, body and mind. We recognize each other’s freedom and facticity. “This simultaneous ambiguity is what we recognize in sexual activity.”<sup>95</sup> Because of this ambiguity, we cannot tell where the boundaries are between subject and object. But that is what Beauvoir wants: since we are part of an original *Mitsein*, boundaries between the individuals must be blurred in order to form the whole *Mitsein*. Erotic activity is how humans experience their ambiguity toward one another. “As embodied consciousness, we reciprocally recognize each other, we act with and on each other, together, we express desire. We desire the other’s freedom as much as our own in erotic activity, for the other’s freedom is part of assertion and the denial of boundaries. What is erotic about sexual activity is its expression of ambiguity.”<sup>96</sup> Because beings are ambiguous, we can have the two coming into one, but they do not unite into one. It is how we can have a union because the boundaries are unclear.

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<sup>94</sup> *SS*, 654.

<sup>95</sup> Andrew, 41.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, “The erotic experience is one that most poignantly discloses to human beings the ambiguity of their condition; in it they are aware of themselves as flesh and as spirit, as the other and as subject” (*SS*, 402).

Love is given without the expectation for something in return. To do this means seeing the other as contingent and not to give each other's meaning to one another. We could still recognize each other's transcendence without sacrificing our own. To do this, both individuals must realize that they are both flawed, that they are not "the one", and that neither sex has an absolute value over the other.

For love to succeed, for love between equals to be possible, woman must be able to transcend her self by giving up her immanence. She must see her self—and others must see her—as a transcendence. Indeed, woman may even play a dominant role in society.<sup>97</sup> With true equality for both sexes, genuine love is possible. Through this, authentic love is a reciprocal relationship between the sexes. So while Sartre sees human relationships as an inevitable conflict, Beauvoir sees Sartre's view inauthentic because one is alienating one's freedom in the other. In other words, Beauvoir finds Sartre's view of love a bad faith version. On Beauvoir's view, however, the individuals involved should go through an "existential conversion" to realize that they can go beyond desire and just simply look at the person by them both mutually recognizing each other as they are. They must see each other as ambiguous bodies in a situation, in a freedom that is situated.

What would be authentic love according to Beauvoir? "Genuine [that is, authentic] love ought to be founded on the mutual recognition of two liberties; the lovers would then experience themselves both as self and as other: neither would give up transcendence, neither would be mutilated; together they would manifest values and

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<sup>97</sup> SS, 668.

aims in the world. For the one and the other, love would be revelation of self by the gift of self and enrichment of the world.”<sup>98</sup> What then is genuine or authentic love? Morgan provides an answer: it is “mutual trust and communication. The lovers should strive to be present to the other in a forthright way so that the relationship can be based on shared and mutual knowledge—albeit partial and open to change.”<sup>99</sup> Mutual knowledge? This is reminiscent of Hegel’s self-consciousnesses mutually knowing each other by mutually recognizing each other. Is Morgan recommending that we can know each other by recognition? She later states that inauthentic love would be a double illusion if there was no knowledge. Other forms of inauthentic love would include dependency, fear, manipulation, and double-victimization. To make love authentic, both man and woman need to be in the Hegelian dialectic so that they can mutually recognize each other and not make one master over the other. This is what Beauvoir aims toward.

A question remains: if Beauvoir is correct on how woman have been seen as the Other and only men have been part of the Hegelian dialectic, how can we accommodate the position of women in the Hegelian dialectic and not be considered as the Other? In order for women to have reciprocal relationships, she must live authentically which means she must be part of history and engage in projects that demonstrates her liberty. She does this through work, by being active and productive. However, the work must be fair. For this, Beauvoir looks for a future under socialism. Through this system, women can be fully liberated and independent, giving up the position of being the Other while

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<sup>98</sup> *SS*, 667.

<sup>99</sup> Morgan, 406. Gothlin portrays the same idea: “[Beauvoir] maintains that authentic love is founded upon reciprocal recognition, friendship, generosity, and understanding” (88). Of course, “understanding” could be understood as part of the Hegelian dialectic as well.

men give up the position of being the Absolute. Under patriarchy however, men are taught to give up the bond and aim for recognition—or in Hegelian terms—aim for risk because that is much more important than the bond, than a shared life. Indeed, through the Hegelian dialectic, asking for recognition is asking for violence: I demand recognition and the only recognition worth having is where it is won in combat. I stood up for my recognition. How does patriarchy see the bond? It sees the bond as woman's neediness which in turn could be interpreted as co-dependent and inferior.

Men prefer the Hegelian reciprocity because it is “a demand for recognition and reads this demand as a sign of independence and autonomy. Men are said to subordinate the value of the bond to the values of recognition and reciprocity because they can, it is said, stand on their own. By patriarchal standards the issue is clear: no recognition, no relationship. Better to break or refuse the bond. Better to be alone, on one's own, than to accept a relationship without recognition.”<sup>100</sup> To have authentic love, the love must be genuine. What does this mean? For something to be genuine, for Beauvoir, it must be generous. It is a gift and it asks nothing in return. Here, we can see where she is responding harshly to Sartre's game: where Sartre states that with gifts, we secretly want a gift in return, Beauvoir states that *genuine* gift-giving means asking nothing in return. For this kind of love as a gift, there is no debt, no need for an exchange. In other words, the demand for recognition is lost. In its place is the bond. Just the mere fact of giving gifts, even if I do not get one in return, means that there is a bond going on.

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<sup>100</sup> Bergoffen, “Beauvoir: (Re)counting the sexual difference,” 256.

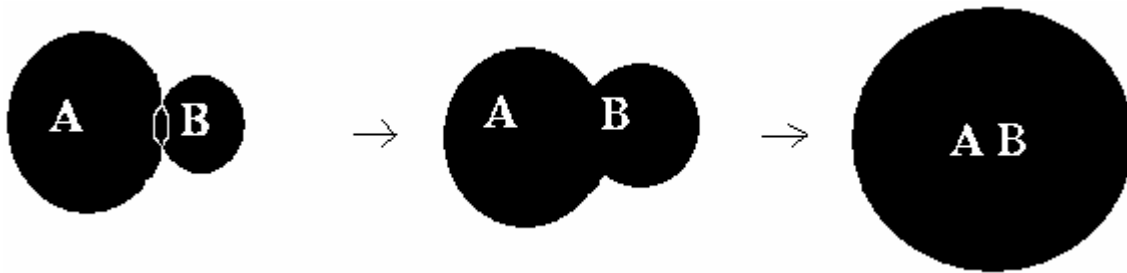
What kind of union, or *Mitsein*, would we have for authentic love? It is worth to quote Beauvoir in full:

It is the duplicity of the husband that dooms the wife to a misfortune of which he complains later that he is himself the victim. Just as he wants her to be at once warm and cool in bed, he requires her to be wholly his and yet no burden; he wishes her to establish him in a fixed place on earth and to leave him free, to assume the monotonous daily round and not to bore him, to be always at hand and never importunate; he wants to have her all to himself and not to belong to her; to live as one of a couple and to remain alone. Thus she is betrayed from the day he marries her. Her life through, she measures the extent of that betrayal. What D. H. Lawrence says of sexual love is generally valid: the union of two human beings is doomed to frustration if it is an attempt at a mutual completion which supposes an original mutilation; marriage should be a combining of two whole, independent existences, not a retreat, an annexation, a flight, a remedy. Ibsen's Nora<sup>[2]</sup> understands this when she makes up her mind that before she can be a wife and mother she must first become a complete person. The couple should not be regarded as a unit, a closed cell; rather each individual should be integrated as such in society at large, where each (whether male or female) could flourish without aid; then attachments could be formed in pure generosity with another individual equally adapted to the group, attachments that would be founded upon the acknowledgement that both are free.<sup>101</sup>

The only way for liberation, the true independence is through a societal and economic change for the equality of women. To have love in equality possible, woman must be economically independent and transcend herself without the aid of man. Figure 3 exemplifies that attitude of love from Beauvoir's point of view.

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<sup>101</sup> SS, 478-9.



**Figure 3: The Beauvoirian Model.** Notice that A and B start off as unequals. As the fusion begins, B goes through transcendence until A and B are fully fused in which they are equal.

When it is all said and done, what can we say about Beauvoir's reply to Sartre? What can we say about Beauvoir's view of love in general? Beauvoir may have indeed responded well to Sartre's view. I have demonstrated that she shows that Sartre's view is inadequate because he assumes an androgynous being. Sartre's view of love and sexuality in particular is ontological. Beauvoir replies by stating that being is gendered and that there is no necessary conflict with the relationship of beings because we were an original couple. After all, Beauvoir subscribes to the idea of *Mitsein* whereas Sartre rejects it.

However, Beauvoir does have metaphysical assumptions of her own that should not be ignored. Since Beauvoir accepts the Hegelian dialectic, it also assumes that she is accepting its androcentricity. She states that visualizing a utopian equaled world would be easy because that "is what the Soviet Revolution *promised: women raised and trained exactly like men* were to work under the same conditions and for the same wages."<sup>102</sup> On top of this, there seems to be a conflict between Beauvoir's want of *Mitsein* and the Hegelian dialectic. "It is no longer a question of a war between

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<sup>102</sup> SS, 724. My emphasis except for the word "promised".

individuals each shut up in his or her sphere: a caste claiming its rights attacks and is resisted by the privileged caste. Here two transcendences are face to face; instead of displaying mutual recognition, each free being wishes to dominate the other.”<sup>103</sup> The *Mitsein* is an ontological solidarity where the people involved have no conflicts, it is a relationship of we; whereas the Hegelian dialectic is conflictual by its very nature, it has no “we” but simply a relationship between me and the Other. The *Mitsein* has no opposition, it is simply interdependence; whereas in the Hegelian dialectic, one is declared the winner. How can Beauvoir have both? How can there be equality if there are power struggles? Is it possible for women and men to be equals if reciprocal recognition is based on a balance of power? Sartre answers with a resounding no; Beauvoir would like to say yes, but I do not see how this is possible.

How could we freely recognize each other’s transcendence without sacrificing the other if she subscribes to Hegel’s dialectic? If love is a gift that should be given freely, whence comes the dialectic? How is there reciprocity if the gift is taken but there is not a gift given back in return? It seems that if she is continuously giving, and he is constantly receiving, she would eventually lose. It may be possible that Beauvoir is arguing for both individuals to give. But if they are constantly giving, who is doing the receiving? While Sartre objectifies the Other, Beauvoir “subjectifies” the other person by only seeing the transcendence, only action, only freedom. She may ask for ambiguity and situation, she may want the idea of people meeting each other to recognize each other’s limits, by seeing each other as subject and object, but she still upholds the ideal

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<sup>103</sup> *SS*, 717-8.

of two subjects—meaning transcendences—meeting each other for authentic love. Yet transcendence is a term that she describes to man. It seems, then, that Beauvoir is asking woman to transcend, to be like men. After all, she labels man as transcendence and woman as immanence, yet she claims that having transcendence is being authentic while being immanent is inauthentic. Going for the spiritual transcendence is making man the standard on which one should aim for. It is the prerequisite that for equality to happen, women should obtain the same rights as men. One could interpret this as women should *be* like men: in order to be free, a woman must enter into a man’s world. Indeed, Beauvoir complains that “in a male supremacist culture these criteria of evaluation are seen, both by the woman in love and the culture at large, as the *only* standards of evaluation worth employing.”<sup>104</sup> If only lovers would “assume the ambiguity with a clear-sighted modesty, correlative of an authentic pride, they would see each other as *equals* and would live their erotic drama in amity.”<sup>105</sup> Unfortunately Beauvoir does not offer a way on how to do this. Even Morgan states that she cannot see Beauvoir’s solution perfect and that love is formed out of both good and bad elements.

Many feminists have claimed that Beauvoir fails to mention the body and nature as an important distinction. Beauvoir also states that motherhood is an inauthentic way because it is still an immanent project: there is no history-making.<sup>106</sup> However feminists complain that Beauvoir has forgotten the productive elements of *re*production.

Transcendence—freedom—is the goal but that goal is the goal for man. Motherhood

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<sup>104</sup> Morgan, 407. Her emphasis.

<sup>105</sup> *SS*, 728.

<sup>106</sup> *SS*, passim.



and domestic labor are regarded as immanence where the woman cannot obtain value because it is non-productive and non-creative. Beauvoir sets up her definitions of transcendence and immanence for transcendence equating with male occupations. Thus, feminists argue that she has been downplaying the feminine because Beauvoir glorifies male occupations and diminishes females ones:

Beauvoir associates immanence with nature, the body and its processes, and transcendence with culture, the spiritual and consciousness, in line with dualistic western philosophy. The recurrence of this dualism in Beauvoir's thinking has been severely criticized by feminist thinkers.<sup>[171]</sup> Beauvoir belittles the body and nature, which she sees as subordinate to consciousness and culture. . . . At the same time as Beauvoir describes preventing the transcendence of another as morally wrong, she also describes the life of men as transcendent and glorifies it at the expense of the life of women. . . . transcendent men appear authentic even as they oppress women.<sup>107</sup>

Woman should also have that same goal to live authentically, but Beauvoir looks at freedom differently than Sartre. “Accordingly, Simone de Beauvoir’s interpretation of the freedom of a prisoner is somewhat different from Sartre’s. To her, a prisoner cannot bring his freedom to positive realization if he cannot put it into action and provide it with a content; for example, by revolting. If not, in such a situation, freedom can only remain negative, and the sole choice is to reject the entire situation—for example, through suicide.”<sup>108</sup> For Beauvoir, there is no absolute freedom that Sartre has. Beauvoir’s notion is a limited freedom which she calls a situation. One can be free according to a situation (cultural, historical, personal, social) and our freedom is limited when other factors limit us in what we do. Each person is in his or her own situation because each person engages in his or her own projects. Our freedom grows and develops over time.

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<sup>107</sup> Lundgren-Gothlin, 239-40.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

We are constrained and limited, yet not determined according to the context of our situation. This also helps Beauvoir's reply to Sartre that we can obtain another person's freedom because it is not an ideal, absolute freedom.

As part of Sartre's androgyny, he claims that subject and object are ahistorical and asocial categories whereas Beauvoir believes that they are conceptual and historical. According to Beauvoir, women have historically been deemed as the object without an easy escape route. Woman can know herself only as an other; "her *pour-autrui*, her being-for-others, is confused with her very being."<sup>109</sup> Woman's *pour-autrui* is more real than her *pour-soi* for "[w]omen are still, for the most part, in a state of subjection. It follows that woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with her true nature in itself, but *as man defines her*. So we must first go on to describe woman such as men have fancied her in their dreams, for what-in-men's-eyes-she-seems-to-be is one of the necessary factors in her real situation."<sup>110</sup> Beauvoir claims that women know more about the feminine world than men do because women have their roots in it.<sup>111</sup> This suggests that she is holding onto the idea of the eternal feminine.

Beauvoir also fails to provide how women can get out of the repressive scheme so that they can have a reciprocal relationship with men. Perhaps men are to blame too, but Beauvoir never gives us a prescription for a way out. Some solutions she provides, however, are modeled on a masculine framework. "Her model is the Kojévian-Marxist throughout: demands for recognition, requiring participation in productive work and

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<sup>109</sup> *SS*, 668. Because of this, men—as the Absolute Subject—see themselves as “the seeing, defining and transcendent ones in relation to women; women, on the other hand, as the absolute objects, have been seen, defined, and transcended” (Lundgren-Gothlin, 174).

<sup>110</sup> *SS*, 137-8. My emphasis.

<sup>111</sup> *SS*, xxxiii.

control of childbearing. Thus, in Beauvoir's philosophy, *women have to adopt a male model of work and participation in the public sphere in order to achieve liberation.*"<sup>112</sup>

Beauvoir's claims that for equality to work, women must enter the workforce; but surely something more must happen for equality to happen than that.

Beauvoir's claim to liberation does not stem from the relations between men and women, however. "For Beauvoir, everyone is equally metaphysically capable of freedom. However, women are situated in ways that make it less likely that they can act on their freedom. . . Femininity is a situation."<sup>113</sup> It is a socio-historical situation. For Beauvoir, this entails that in order to change the dynamics between men and women, we must change the socio-historical situation right now. Through this, women will be able to have a sense of transcendence. We can see that for Sartre, transcendence was a descriptive concept, whereas it was a normative concept for Beauvoir. She also speaks of generosity and love as a gift as a reply to Sartre, but Sartre could easily reply that to give a gift, one secretly wants one too and I do not see how Beauvoir could reply back. Beauvoir still holds on the utopian dream of the unification of the lovers coming into one. But how? Even if two never unites into one, and if Beauvoir recommends the Hegelian dialectic, this goes back to Sartre.

Despite all this, to claim that Beauvoir is simply a female version of Sartre seriously underlies historical scholarship. Indeed, Fullbrook and Fullbrook have challenged the assumption that Beauvoir was a shadow of Sartre by looking at posthumously published war diaries and letters. They argue that Beauvoir's *She Came*

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<sup>112</sup> Lundgren-Gothlin, 219. My emphasis.

<sup>113</sup> Andrew, 40.

*to Stay* (1943), which was thought to have been an application of Sartre's philosophy in *Being and Nothingness* (1943), had actually been thought out and written *before* Sartre started writing his magnum opus. Indeed, Simons agrees with Fullbrook and Fullbrook's conclusion by looking at Beauvoir's diary in 1927, before Beauvoir met Sartre. Simons conclusion matches what Fullbrook and Fullbrook have shown:

“Indeed, many of the philosophical ideas credited as originating with Sartre's essay, including the theory of relations with the Other, did not appear in Sartre's journal and other writings until *after* he had read the second draft of Beauvoir's novel.”<sup>114</sup> She has made improvements over Sartre's view by viewing beings as gendered. Yet, even if she critiques the idea of men and women becoming the same<sup>115</sup> (where the same makes man the norm), she does move forward in looking at differences as a way to escape the burden of women:

To emancipate woman is to refuse to confine her to the relations she bears to man, not to deny them to her; let her have her independent existence and she will continue non the less to exist for him *also*: mutually recognizing each other as subject, each will yet remain for the other an *other*. The reciprocity of their relations will not do away with the miracles—desire, possession, love, dream, adventure—worked by the division of human beings into two separate categories. . .<sup>116</sup>

By seeing each other mutually recognizing each other, we can tell that we will always be different but this difference will become a strength. Indeed, as soon as women become liberated, then both man and woman can make history together: “when we abolish the

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<sup>114</sup> Simons, 88. My emphasis.

<sup>115</sup> “[I]n the deep intimacy of the couple, husband and wife become for one another the *Same*; no exchange is any longer possible between them, no giving and no conquering. Thus if they do continue to make love, it is often with a sense of shame: they feel that the sexual act is no longer an intersubjective experience in which each goes beyond self, but rather a kind of joint masturbation” (SS, 446).

<sup>116</sup> SS, 731.

slavery of half of humanity, together with the whole system of hypocrisy that it implies, then the 'division' of humanity will reveal its genuine significance *and the human couple will find its true form.*"<sup>117</sup> I will turn to Luce Irigaray in the next chapter and how difference—particularly sexual difference—and the couple could find a way for genuine love.

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<sup>117</sup> *SS*, 731.

## CHAPTER IV

### IRIGARAY

What has Beauvoir left unanswered according to Irigaray? Beauvoir saw transcendence with subjectivity and immanence with the absolute Other—women. Yet men, since they are the only ones that do transcend, are active because they are part of history. Since women are confined to a Sisyphean lifestyle—by living a life of repetition and mundane monotony—they are static and frozen, thus the immanence. Irigaray looks at this differently. She sees the feminine as angels; they are a moving target going back and forth, the messengers that are never immobile. The masculine, on the other hand, reduces things to the One. That is “to reduce all experience, all reality to a fixed set of fundamental categories;”<sup>118</sup> thus eliminating any fundamental differences between the sexes.

Beauvoir has been criticized that in order for women to be truly liberated, she must achieve the positions of power that men have had. “Beauvoir did little to counter these charges. On the contrary, she reinforced these views, primarily by refusing to reply to critics, but also by suggesting, in interviews and publications that her views *hadn't* changed since publishing *The Second Sex*.”<sup>119</sup> It is worthwhile to quote from Léon:

As is plain to see, the French existentialist does not speak with a single voice. Either she wishes to have it both ways, or she takes with one hand that which she gives with the other. On the one hand, she [re]assures<sup>120</sup> [!] her audience that ‘boys will always be boys and girls will always be girls’; on the other, she grafts

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<sup>118</sup> Gutting, 342.

<sup>119</sup> Brison, 199. Her emphasis.

<sup>120</sup> Brackets and parentheses are hers.

a mystifying member upon her unduly castrated female. On the other hand, she denies the existence of feminine qualities and values (Beauvoir 1972, 628); on the other, she ends up, with her back to the wall, forced to recognize the existence of a feminine specificity. What kind of specificity? Biological? Historical? Positive? Negative? Willed? Tolerated? Mixed? One never knows for sure. She hesitates, goes this way and that, and, when cornered, runs to the masculine camp. When all is said and done, even the residual/infinitesimal difference she has allowed to subsist between men and women, she is willing to sacrifice. *Beauvoir finds herself trapped in phallocentrism* and her feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man and whose voice is that of the ventriloquist's dummy. Beauvoir's women, in truth, are men, and men not altogether healthy. To the spur/ious character of the endeavor could be applied these words of Derrida:

And in truth they too are men, those women feminists . . .<sup>121</sup> Feminism is nothing but the operation of a woman who aspires to be like a man. And in order to resemble the masculine dogmatic philosopher this woman lays claim—just as much as he—to truth, scientific and objective in all their castrated delusions of virility. Feminism too seeks to castrate. It wants a castrated woman (1979, 65).<sup>122</sup>

As far as Beauvoir is concerned, suppressing motherly desires and feminine roles is the way to achieve transcendence. This is understandable from Beauvoir's time, but later feminists have pointed out that this transcendence is reaching out to masculinity. It never occurs to her that having feminine roles can create new values and shape a different perspective on what it would be like to be a woman.

During the suffrage movement, there were reformations for equality between the sexes. The aim was a sex-neutral universal where both males and females could not overpower another. The hopeful outcome would be equality in the work force, equal pay, and the like. In short, feminists argued for the same treatment that society gave men. What Irigaray and later feminists want to point out is that the earlier feminists

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<sup>121</sup> Her ellipses.

<sup>122</sup> Léon, 152-3. My emphasis.

have aspired to be like men without appreciating the differences; “the question of sexual difference was shelved for the moment. The disparity between women and men could be rectified, the assumption was, by improving women’s situation so that it approximated to men’s.”<sup>123</sup> What became emphasized was that gender roles needed to be displaced: women could do the same things as men could do. To claim that we need to concentrate on the differences, particularly sexual differences seem to “fall back” on the idea that women and men have their own “natures” where feminists have struggled to fight against. What Irigaray wants to do is to look at sexual difference but not opposed to gender. She “sees the need to examine gender in relation to, and not in exclusion from, sex.”<sup>124</sup> She wants to ask what would happen if rather than women trying to reach the same values as men, women seriously looked at what it means to be women.

Beauvoir wanted both of the sexes to be equal: equality through economics, equality in the workforce, and equality through social reform. Irigaray, however, saw this equality as reducing the sexes to the same. To be equal to men is to *become* like men. Suppose society did make it that both sexes were equal: meaning equal standards of living and equal rights as men. While women would enjoy the same benefits as men, women would still be masquerading their femininity that has been prescribed and defined by the masculine. Being equal to men is not enough for Irigaray: “women merely ‘equal’ to men would be ‘like them,’ therefore not women.”<sup>125</sup> Irigaray

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<sup>123</sup> Chanter, “Irigaray,” 590.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, 591.

<sup>125</sup> *This Sex*, 166.



passionately disagrees with the idea of becoming equal to men and argues for differences, particularly sexual difference. What is sexual difference? Part of this chapter will dedicate what Irigaray means by sexual difference. This sexual difference will explain her views on love. Admittedly, Irigaray will want to say that we should see love in all realms of life, not just the private relationship. For her, love forms a community of love which forms a better society and democracy. While her project does seem worthy of analysis, my focus for this chapter will be on the private relationship with the individuals involved.

Critics often confuse Irigaray as an oppositional feminist, a feminist who argues to be completely different from men. Irigaray disagrees. To state that women should be totally different from men presupposes the metaphysics of the Same: the self is still paradigmatically masculine while the feminine remains Other. The differences are eradicated and any form of difference is seen to be inferior. Before I can analyze Irigaray's concept of sexual difference, I must mention Freud and Lacan to give a brief understanding where Irigaray is coming from.

### ***Freud***

Through Freud, we have the Oedipal complex, castration anxiety, and penis envy.<sup>126</sup> The young man “passes the tests” which makes him go through society without any neurosis. The young girl, however, struggles harder. Indeed, she has another “test” she must go through: penis envy.<sup>127</sup> Penis envy is the idea that girls see boys having a penis but then realizing that she herself does not have one. It stems from the idea that

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<sup>126</sup> Freud, 225.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 229.

the little girl has a pre-Oedipal attachment to her mother. However, the girl finds the mother responsible for her lack of a penis, thus the development of penis envy. The girl then hates her mother and starts to fall in love with the father because he has a penis by which he can provide her with it.<sup>128</sup> The little girl believes she is living in an illusion because she lacks what her mother has desired. By the young girl wanting a penis—which means every girl has wanted a penis, it follows that the standard to follow is to have the penis, to be like men. What this means is that gender has been “structured around the male genital system and male desire.”<sup>129</sup> Since the young girl does not have the penis, she is lacking something. But this lack is important here. She sees herself as someone who is lacking from a person whom she loved (the mother) but who turned out to want something different. Therefore, the girl thinks, there must be something wrong with me. Eventually, girls become aware that the penis is associated with power. Notice that since the females are striving to reach the penis, they are the oddities. Therefore, our binary duality is men and not-men. For Freud, women are just men lacking penises.<sup>130</sup> Irigaray’s critique is that even though Freud brought to light masculinity and femininity in psychoanalytic parameters, something remained hidden even though it was a key feature in this science: sexual difference. Yet Freud makes the masculine the sexual model.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>129</sup> Minsky, 50.

<sup>130</sup> Freud, 220.

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 231: “It would not be surprising if it were to turn out that each sexuality had its own special libido appropriated to it, so that one sort of libido would pursue the aims of a masculine sexual life and another sort those of a feminine one. *But nothing of the kind is true. There is only one libido*, which serves both the masculine and the feminine sexual functions. To it itself we cannot assign any sex; if, following the conventional equation of activity and masculinity, we are inclined to describe it as masculine, we must not

Another binary distinction is since the females are lacking something, they really do not have a sex organ. It is a no-thing, a nothing. So our other binary duality is penis and nothing. Looking at it again, we have:

Men/not-men

Penis/nothing

where the former has more significance than the latter. And so, the females are seen as lacking, deformed males, and incomplete. The binary opposition became A and not-A as opposed to A and B. “Instead of posing woman as –A in relation to man, defined as A (a logic which inevitably prioritizes the positive term), Irigaray seeks an altogether different space for woman, one not defined in relation to men, but in their own terms—a ‘B’ rather than a ‘-A’.”<sup>132</sup> However, sexual differences

are distinguished *not* on the basis of (Saussurian ‘pure’) difference, but in terms of dichotomous opposition or distinction; not, that is, as contraries (‘A’ and ‘B’), but as contradictories (‘A’ and ‘not-A’).

In relations governed by pure difference, *each* term is defined by all the others; there can be no privileged term which somehow dispenses with its (constitutive) structuring and value in relations to other terms.<sup>133</sup>

It is a difference that is not defined to a norm—that would just be more of the same.

Instead, difference is thought of as other, not bound to any system or structure.<sup>134</sup>

However, there is no sexual difference because the sexes are coded by one single male organ: the penis. Irigaray, however, does not want to replace the penis with the vagina as the privileged signifier because the vagina has been part of the silencing of woman

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forget that it also covers trends with a passive aim. Nevertheless the juxtaposition ‘feminine libido’ is without any justification.” My emphasis.

<sup>132</sup> Grosz, 172.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Féral, 91.

when it has been represented as a lack. The vagina/vulva/womb has been silenced and written out. The penis has been exalted as holy presence; the vagina is pure absence.

From here, Lacan contributes his own interpretation of Freud.

### *Lacan*

Irigaray has been deeply influenced by Lacan even though she rejects some of his views. As Lacan did a reinterpretation of Freud, Irigaray rejects both views and has an interpretation using Lacanian terminology.

To start, Lacan did not see the unconscious as some “thing” where the ego “sits.” In other words, the unconscious is not a “buried” conscious. Instead, the unconscious is an *other* form of reason, logic, and rules that it follows. It cannot be reduced to the unconscious. The purpose of psychoanalysis is not to “cure” the analysand (i.e. the patient), that is just therapy. The purpose of psychoanalysis is to restore the desire to the analysand which the analysand did not acknowledge but still lies within.<sup>135</sup>

There are three “phases” for Lacan:

1. The Real is “the order preceding the ego and the organization of the drives.”<sup>136</sup> In other words, it cannot be experienced because it is full or as Lacan would say, it lacks lack. It has no boundaries, borders, limits or oppositions. But this is not the same as reality. Reality is lived and experienced through the imaginary and symbolic orders. Before the child

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. Grosz, 27 and 196n2. There Grosz confers to Lacan and Granoff: “Are we in the same sphere as in everyday life, when we meet our fellow man and render psychological judgments about him? Are we in the same sphere when we say that such-and-such has a strong personality? Certainly not. . . We must admit this direct judgment of a persona is of little importance in the analytic experience. It is not the *real* relationship that constitutes the proper field of analysis” (“Fetishism: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real,” in *Perversions, Psychodynamics and Therapy*. Ed. by M. Balint. London: Tavistock, 1956 (270)).

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

forms a self, he or she is in this phase. The child does not see any boundaries; he or she does not distinguish the differences between him or her and the environment. Eventually, the child discovers a lack and enters the Imaginary.

2. The Imaginary is “the order of identification with images.”<sup>137</sup> Here, the libidinal pleasure is not regulated by law. Relations of self and other govern the law, but the self sees itself only in terms of the other. The self sees itself *through* the other: “The *I* is truly an other.”<sup>138</sup> However, this is regulated by a third term: the Father. The Name of the Father cuts off the possibility for the child to engage in pleasure with the mother. Through the imaginary, the (symbolic) father castrates the child and enters him or her into the symbolic.
3. The Symbolic is the world we live in through the Law of the Father and language. The child has learned the idea of Otherness and has found the “self” through its own other, the image in the mirror. It is the structure of the world and we have to enter it in order to become speaking subjects, in order to say “I”. As such, having a self means to project the imaginary projection of the self onto an image, the other in the mirror. The position of the self and other is lacking. Everyone wants to get rid of this lack and everyone wants to reach this position to get rid of the lack. Under Derridian terms, it is the center of the structure that everyone wants to reach and the center of *this* structure is the Other or the Phallus.

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<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

There is a never-ending lack which Lacan calls desire: we are constantly trying to get rid of lack but it can never be done. The desire is the desire to be the Other, the desire to be the center of the symbolic order, or language itself.<sup>139</sup> It is also where sexuality comes into play for “human sexuality is not governed by the laws of nature, and does not culminate in a ‘normal genital sexuality’ which aims at procreation, but is rather governed by the symbolic order and the law of the signifier.”<sup>140</sup>

What are the stages the people go through to reach the symbolic order?

1. The Pre-Oedipal phase – this is the blissful state where there are no splits or divisions. The self has no conception of boundaries with the other. As far as the neonate is concerned, they are one. The infant is everywhere fragmented: his or her zones, pleasures, sensations, and impulses are a series of aggregates as opposed to a whole totality. Each part wants to satisfy itself instead of the body as a whole. The infant is driven by needs which are satisfiable.

Eventually, the child sees itself as relating itself to others. It is a split between self and other and is dependent on others. It does so by demands because to demand something is to make some sort of communal gesture to the other. But demands are not quite that easy to satisfy. With needs, they can be satisfied with an object, but demands usually have no object. The child demands recognition or love. In other words, once the baby realizes that it is a separate entity, it can never go back to the Real because he or she

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<sup>139</sup> “[D]esire substitutes the ‘absolute’ condition” (Lacan, quoted by Grosz, 64).

<sup>140</sup> Shepherdson, 134.

already knows about the separation and that lack is possible. The idea of the other exists and there is no turning back. And the demand is for the “other” to disappear, to have a sense of fullness once again as it felt in the realm of the Real: to have all unity. Alas, it is impossible because the infant unconsciously knows that the other is a separate entity. The child makes demands to the other, but cannot articulate because the infant does not have language yet. As such, the sex drive is driven by a lack; it is a return to the mother. Pre-oedipal sexuality is chaotic and all over the place. Erogenous zones are everywhere and circulate throughout the entire body. Apropos, the infant does not have a concept of a self yet, only a concept of the other. This is where the Mirror Stage comes in.

2. The Mirror Stage – the infant sees an image of him or her through the gaze of the mother. This stage is still pre-oedipal and pre-linguistic, but it is important to note that the visual apparatus becomes crucial. The infant must first see the self as the mother sees it, as an other, before the infant can see him- or herself as a self. The self finds itself through the other. This is correlated with the Imaginary. Eventually, the infant realizes a lack when the mother is missing or absent. The child eventually “obtains” an independent identity of the mother. Instead of being fragmented, the child sees itself in the mirror and sees that the image has “got it together” and is whole. Eventually, the child sees him- or herself in the mirror and then back to other people. The child sees that people are whole and notices that the image in the

mirror is whole. Thus, the one who is reflecting off the mirror must be whole as well. However, what the child sees is not really the self, but only what “others” look like. The child mistakenly thinks the image in the mirror is the “I”, but it is only an image. However, the (m)other is there to reinforce the idea that the image in the mirror belongs to the child in the sense of an “I”, thus creating the ego. We may be lacking the mother, but we are “whole” within ourselves. This is why the “other” came before the “self.” The child can recognize the other and can only get the self through the reinforcement from the other. The self *is* other because we get our “I” through an image, an other.

3. Oedipal phase – as the child slowly matures, it sees itself becoming more independent from the mother and sees the mother as the other. It does so through communication which is the symbolic order. Oedipal sexuality is fully concentrated on the genitals and reproduction. However, the relationship between mother and child is cut off from the Father. There is a (symbolic) castration of the phallus signifier. Because of this castration, the child enters into language and is able to communicate with the mother, but is never able to return to the original source of gratification.

From here, boys and girls take different routes. By going through the Symbolic Order, both genders go through different doors. For boys, they have a chance at getting the Phallus because they believe that their penis is closer to the phallus. The boys identify with the father because the father represents the symbolic order, the logos.



Throughout this period, the boy obtains individuality and subjectivity as well as a dominant attitude.

Girls, on the other hand, are lacking penises so they have a harder time achieving the Phallus. They cannot fully internalize the symbolic order because they cannot identify with the father. They see themselves as Lack. Yet they still have language which means that they are part of the symbolic order. How did that happen? They were enforced from the outside; they had no choice. So women do have language, but it is from a masculine order and masculine terms because it is the same language that men are given. This does not express what women feel, however; it only expresses what men think. In *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray has a double meaning with the word “speculum”. She shows how men are mirrored as the dominators and that the perfect image of Man is God. Woman, therefore, is a distorted version of man. She has nothing to mirror. The second meaning is the gynecological tool. It is curved, so the mirroring is reflected back at the woman but what this does is opens up the feminine, the sexual difference in order to “jam the masculine model” in Western culture. Irigaray does not want to come up with a new theory where woman is subject or object. I shall mention how to jam the masculine model later in this chapter.

His speculum is the female. Her speculum is a curved mirror that surrounds and is surrounded by the female body. It represents the other woman, not woman as man’s other, but another woman that is altogether different from man’s other. She has always remained the object of male specula(riza)tion. As is shown in *No Exit*, Inez mirrors Estelle which makes Estelle have no identity of her own. Since women do not have

language, they must either speak gibberish or remain silent in the symbolic order. Is there anything outside of the symbolic order, outside of masculine language? Yes, but it is unknowable according to Lacan because anything outside the masculine order is unintelligible or it does not exist. This is why women have been considered the Other because they are outside the masculine order, thus unintelligible.

From this, Lacan states that “The Woman does not exist,”<sup>141</sup> he means that the subject’s sexual “identity” is regarded by what position “s/he” holds according to the phallus. For Lacan, we do not use language to communicate; rather, we “enter into” language which has a fixed system of structures where the Phallus is the master signifier. The split between male and female is in the pre-Oedipal world, but because they both enter the symbolic, “[l]anguage tends to reverse that split.”<sup>142</sup> Yet we cannot define the feminine because defining it would mean we would have to use language which would come from the symbolic/phallic discourse. She has been suppressed by the logic of men. Because of this, men have never been able to understand women or the feminine except as a reflection of man or the masculine. For woman to speak, she would have to be incoherent, stay silent, or else resort to speaking under masculine terms because the world that we experience “is but a manifestation of the symbolic order as it has been constituted by men.”<sup>143</sup> Along with that, women’s sexuality is always compared, and defined in terms of male sexuality. One would always be using masculine terminology. The little girl can never identify with her mother because she is already saturated in the

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<sup>141</sup> Lacan, quoted from Grosz, 140.

<sup>142</sup> *SG*, 111.

<sup>143</sup> Stanton, 73.

phallic order. The little girl has no choice but to be indoctrinated into the socioculture order of reproduction so that she can take the mother's place. She must give up her love for her mother so that she can become one.

To ask "what is a woman?" can never be asked in a masculine model because the answer will always come out in one form: lack. She can only speak intelligently as a sexualized male or as asexualized.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, Irigaray firmly states that she does not want to theorize about woman, but to secure a legitimate place for the feminine in sexual difference.<sup>145</sup> Indeed, the feminine has been defined as the inverse of the masculine. But for women to become speaking (as) woman, they would have to be subjects in their own right.

Why does this not happen? It is because of the Name of the Father: the Father cuts off the possibility, he precludes the bond between mother and child. He forces the child into the Symbolic realm and if she does not comply, she is seen as literally mad.

The father

prohibits both mother and child from satisfying their desires, whether the mother identifies the child with the phallus that she lacks or whether the child is assured of being the bearer of the phallus by satisfying, incestuously, the mother's desire. Depriving them of the fulfillment of their desire, of the 'fullness' of pleasure, the father introduces them, or reintroduces them, to the exigencies of the symbolization of desire through language, that is, to the necessity that desire pass by way of a demand.<sup>146</sup>

By cutting off the possibility to express her desire, she must follow the symbolic order where the phallus is the signified for all signifiers. The masculine model has made

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. *This Sex*, 149.

<sup>145</sup> Cf. *This Sex*, 159.

<sup>146</sup> *This Sex*, 61.

the rules for all language and the feminine cannot express herself because the possibility has been “cut off.” Women cannot say that they are woman because that has no answer under the feminine symbolic. To answer would go back to the masculine truth. At best, “they” can only say “I *am* not” or “I am not *one*:” “To claim that the feminine can be expressed in the form of a concept is to allow oneself to be caught up again in a system of ‘masculine’ representations, in which women are trapped in a system of meaning which serves the auto-affection of the (masculine) subject.”<sup>147</sup> This is why two can never become one because women are the sex which is not one.

As is expressed in her essay “The Eternal Irony of the Community” in *Speculum of the Other Woman*, Irigaray portrays Hegel as reducing woman to the role of object:

Woman has no gaze, no discourse for her specific specularization that would allow her to identify with herself (the same)—to return into the self—or break free of the natural specular process that now holds her—to get out of the self. Hence, woman does not take an active part in the development of history, for she is never anything but the still undifferentiated opaqueness of sensible matter, the store (of) substance for the sublation of self, or being as what is, or what he is (or was), here and now. . . . In her case ‘I’ never equals ‘I,’ and she is only that individual will that the master takes possession of, . . . and finding some hint of her own self, her own ego, only in another, a You—or a He—who speaks.<sup>148</sup>

Woman has no discourse of her own that can render an image of her own. Man “specularizes” the world meaning that wherever he looks, he projects his own Imaginary onto the world whereby he sees his own reflection wherever he looks. As a “male Other,” she cannot express her desire. She has no reflection except a male one because Lacan’s Imaginary is male. If women do look in the symbolic mirror, literally nothing

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<sup>147</sup> *This Sex*, 122-3.

<sup>148</sup> *Speculum*, 224-5.

reflects back. What Irigaray is suggesting that through the speculum—instead of the mirror that Lacan prescribes—the female genitalia could be a signifier as the Phallus is. In other words, Lacan’s theory is a prescription rather than a description of patriarchal thinking.

Unlike Lacan, Irigaray claimed that there was within the imaginary a male imaginary and a female imaginary. But this male imaginary is a love of the same. The woman, because her body remains unsymbolised, is defined as raw material for the substrate of men. Thus preventing a woman to encounter her imaginary. What women must do is develop her imaginary. From this, a feminine identity can develop without being defined or compared to the masculine. This does not mean to say that she wants to replace the masculine with the feminine, or develop a new theory of subject or object but by “jamming the theoretical machinery”<sup>149</sup> comes out a positive feminine excess where she will not be defined as a lack from a masculine standpoint. This will produce distinct feminine discourses.

According to Irigaray’s take on Lacan, girls lag behind in the imaginary while boys escape from the imaginary to the symbolic in the Oedipal phase.<sup>150</sup> According to Irigaray, “Lacan’s account of symbolic subjectivity is simply the male imaginary which has been raised to the status of universal, phallic law.”<sup>151</sup> The female imaginary is concealed by the phallus. Although the Phallus is important for Lacan, he never explicitly explains why. This is where Irigaray finds him problematic. “[W]hat Lacan

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<sup>149</sup> *This Sex*, 78.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Minsky, 193.

<sup>151</sup> Campbell, 108.

calls subjectivity in the Symbolic is simply a representation of the male Imaginary.”<sup>152</sup> Concealing the female genitals from the Imaginary to the Symbolic depreciates her capacity for bodily pleasure. However, this is not something to lament. For Irigaray, “women’s life in the imaginary [is] full of untapped possibilities for women.”<sup>153</sup> Anything that woman knows about the imaginary, including sexual desire, is from a male point of view. “In other words, the only woman we know is the ‘masculine feminine,’ the phallic feminine, woman as man sees her. But, said Irigaray, there is another woman to know, the ‘feminine feminine,’ woman as women see her.”<sup>154</sup> Is this possible? Can we know the “feminine feminine?”

It looks “impossible to think the ‘feminine feminine’ within the structures of patriarchal thought. When men look at women, they see not women but reflections, or images of likeness, of men.”<sup>155</sup> To know women—which would be impossible—we would have to know female sexual pleasure or *jouissance*. However, *jouissance* cannot be known to women because *jouissance* is not thought or spoken in a phallic language. Were *jouissance* to find words to express itself, it would destroy the symbolic order. *Jouissance*, from the masculine perspective, is seen as “unproductive” pleasure. Her orgasms are useless because her pleasure is not needed for (re)production. Yet, this *jouissance* is not just genital orgasmic pleasure; it is a whole bodily experience and the masculine mindset would wonder what the point behind bodily pleasure is when genital pleasure is all that is needed for reproduction.

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<sup>152</sup> Minsky, 192.

<sup>153</sup> Tong, 202.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*

Even Freud does not see a feminine libido because the thought of a possible difference of a feminine libido never occurred to him. Reducing the difference to the same *is* the truth: “the a priori and the desire for sameness can be maintained only if a *single* desire is in control.”<sup>156</sup> “Irigaray thinks that because patriarchal men still unconsciously identify with the mother and the ‘feminine’, male culture is governed by men’s love of the same (other men) rather than difference (woman). In what she describes as a culture of the same, woman, instead of being able to represent difference—what she calls ‘the other of the other’—can only represent reflections of men, which she describes as ‘the other of the same.’”<sup>157</sup> Woman’s “otherness” is unrepresentable because the peripheral “other” is conceptualized in relation to the masculine domain. Woman’s erotic interests are killed because they are reduced to the same. The interesting paradox is that her pleasures and erotic capabilities are endless. She is always wanting more. “In fact, this *more* is the condition of sexual female desire. Impossible, no doubt, to satisfy in everyday life. But not pathological for all that.”<sup>158</sup> What Irigaray wants to do is to show that difference should be taken into account where it is not a difference of Woman from Man, but an image of Woman-as-Other.

Irigaray’s new Symbolic would reconfigure the female Imaginary where this Symbolic would focus on the difference, specifically sexual difference described as two lips touching and re-touching. “Woman ‘touches herself’ all the time, and moreover no

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<sup>156</sup> *Speculum*, 43.

<sup>157</sup> Minsky, 193.

<sup>158</sup> *An Ethics*, 64.

one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus, within herself, she is already two—but not divisible into one(s)—that caress each other.”<sup>159</sup> But caressing under the masculine model is through a mediator: a child, preferably a boy. With this child, man can identify with his son and rediscovers the pleasure of maternal fondling while woman touches herself again by caressing the part of the body that she lacks: her baby/penis/clitoris.<sup>160</sup> By living in a phallocratic society, man is in control of history and is proprietor of woman and children. But the downside is that he has lost the pleasure of his own body: his focus of pleasure is entirely on genitals whereas the pleasure of the feminine is a bodily experience.

She has not found the value of her sex organs so she idealizes the penis through penis envy. Sure there is the “mother” and “father”, but these are merely social roles; there is no true interaction of the couple. They do not make love; they only divide labor by (re)producing. This touching has no distinction between active and passive: it is always touching but not an “active” touching. Yet her pleasure is from an indefinite touching. By seeing woman as having sex organs everywhere and deconstructing the binary oppositions of penis/nothing or clitoris, a new system would emerge which would liberate heterosexuality. It would explore the idea that both sexes can come together and not see love as a function of reproduction or the necessity for children. Her sexuality would be everywhere: in touching, kissing, looking, writing, all over the body.

From the masculine standpoint, how can women “touch” themselves when their own pleasure is denied? How can women authorize themselves if they are lacking?

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<sup>159</sup> *This Sex*, 24.

<sup>160</sup> Cf. *This Sex*, 27.



How can they “touch” each other if their virginity<sup>161</sup> is regarded as something to penetrate and possess? From the masculine standpoint, what is the function of woman’s sexual pleasure? It is pointless. On the other hand, knowing that a woman has an orgasm

signif[ies] the success—men think—of their sexual domination of women. They are *proof that the techniques for pleasure men have elaborated are valid, that man is the uncontested master of the means of production of pleasure*. Women are there as witnesses. Their training is designed to subject them to an exclusively phallocratic sexual economy. Novices succumb completely to their wide-eyed appetite for erection, violent penetration, repeated blows and injuries. Full-fledged female libertines speak and act like phalocrats: they seduce, suck, screw, strike, even slaughter those weaker than themselves, like the strong men they are.<sup>162</sup>

Woman can have pleasure, but under the gaze of the man. As long as he is there watching, anything goes. No form of sexual pleasure is going to escape him, but the woman gets pleasure from touching, not looking. Through touching, both are involved whereas the gaze is directed to one. The male sexual enterprise is pornographic: he is always looking, aiming for repetition and quantity. The feminine on the other hand is more sensual; everything is a new: the feminine is looking for quality. Irigaray urges women to refuse the masculine order and to express the multiplicity of their sex by expressing love between women. With this, “nothing is privileged” and no one is the master. Instead of focusing pleasure on the genitals like the masculine phallus, pleasure

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<sup>161</sup> “*The virginal woman, on the other hand, is pure exchange value*. She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men. In and of herself, she does not exist. . . In this sense, her natural body disappears into its representative function,” *This Sex*, 186 (her emphasis). Irigaray also mentions that the virgin woman is exchange value, but the “deflowered” woman is use value: she is no longer on the market because she is now man’s private property. The only social roles that woman have are mother, virgin, or prostitute and that is where their sexuality comes from. But with all three of these roles, woman cannot get her own pleasure, partly because she has no need for it, but partly because she is denied of it. Woman is only seen as representatives of men’s desires and “labor.”

<sup>162</sup> *This Sex*, 199. Her emphasis.

is happening all the time because the lips are constantly being touched by one another. The female Symbolic would generate fluidity, openness, and free play. Under the phallus, male sensation takes on binary oppositions where everything is privileged and controlled. Ironically, males are always experiencing a “lack” by their unconscious dependence on the (m)other. “Male lack, therefore, has been unconsciously projected onto women”<sup>163</sup> by being reflected from their symbolic mirrors. Males cannot take this symbolic castration so they lash out onto the other. What needs to happen is to have sexual difference recognized by the sexes. She should expand her *jouissance* right here, right now. There would be no lack in *jouissance* because “[i]f desire is fundamentally lack, lack in being, *jouissance* is positivity, it is a ‘something’ lived by a body when pleasure stops being pleasure. It is a plus, a sensation that is beyond pleasure.”<sup>164</sup> So when Lacan stated that women can never know or say their own *jouissance*, Irigaray would reply that Lacan is not listening. He cannot *hear* because he does not know how or where to listen.

By recognizing the differences, both would have contributions to society instead of one dominating the other. How can they acknowledge their differences? What are the differences? Particularly, what is sexual difference?

### ***Sexual Difference and “Essentialism”***

What does Irigaray mean by “sexual difference?” Admittedly, she does state that there must be a new perspective at how one views males and females. Superficially, one could suppose that what she means by sexual difference is biological difference.

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<sup>163</sup> Minsky, 193.

<sup>164</sup> Braunstein, 104.

However, a closer reading reveals something deeper than that. When we hear the word “difference”, there is an automatic negative connotation to it. We think that for something to be different, it is lacking something (from the norm). The different is what makes us think as extraordinarily avoidable. Irigaray wants to see difference as a positive element. Difference does not mean opposed, compared, or complimentary. Difference is a positive value where the different things are incommensurable.

Sexual difference may be confused with the coition. Sexual difference does not have to do with the act of reproduction “but in the access the two sexes have to culture.”<sup>165</sup> A result from this culture could be childbearing and reproduction as well as gender behaviors. If there is no sexed culture, the genealogy of woman is collapsed inside the man which gets us back to the fusion that Irigaray opposes. The idea is to have two sexes so that both sexes have their rights and justices according to their different needs and desires so that the power plays would be disestablished. Ethics varies for different sexes. For love to be possible, the rights of both sexes need to be in written code. From there, the couple would convert individual morality into a collective ethics. But in order for this to happen, there must be an ethics of the couple. It is not an “either/or” dichotomy, but a “both/and” of difference.

Indeed, Irigaray questions the idea of Hegel’s master/servitude dialectic. People have assumed that women—if they want to be taken seriously—should be considered equal with men. Although it may look sexually neutral on the face of it, it actually presupposes a masculine bent. “There is, similarly, a failure to raise the question of

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<sup>165</sup> *SG*, vi.

what it means to be a man, and what it means for women to aspire to the ideal of equality with men. There is, in short, no way of asking the question: what does it mean to be a woman? The question of sexual difference is not yet posed—so long as feminism contents itself with representing women as if they were like men.”<sup>166</sup> What it is like to be a woman has never been asked. It has never come across its own terms. It has only come across comparisons between men and women and usually stating that women fall short of men. Thus, woman itself has never had their own terms, only by comparison with men has it been asked.

Now one could ask why not have a neutral language so that there is no bias or domination of one sex over the other. Irigaray thinks finding a neutral language is pointless, mainly because no one is neutral on anything, but also because it is misguided. Irigaray’s response is that the neuter means neither-one-nor-the-other. But “[b]efore that neither-one-nor-the-other can be signified, the one and the other must actually exist, two different identities have to be defined in a way other than as artificially opposed poles of a single human model. Even if the identity of each gender has yet to be exhaustively determined or accomplished, we must use as our basis two irreducible identities.”<sup>167</sup> The neuter is not real. What is it? There are two sexes and that is all. Why have a neutral term if there are no neutral sexes? As Irigaray states, “[w]omen and men exist. Why sacrifice their reality to belonging to an abstract human kind that remains ill-defined?”<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Chanter, “Irigaray,” 592.

<sup>167</sup> *ILTY*, 128.

<sup>168</sup> *ILTY*, 128.

The western culture is monosexual which means that men speak to men (the “I” or the same) and women are merely the mediators of this exchange of the “I”. They are never partners in a dialogue. Even something as simple as “I love you” is under power relations which the “I” seeks to master the “you”. Sexual difference establishes an “I” for women as well. “Women crave communication—the kind of intersubjective communication they once had with their mothers. But because the norm for subjectivity is masculine, women can no longer say ‘I’ and ‘you’ with a feminine subject in mind; thus their language becomes oriented toward ‘he’ and ‘they,’ with ‘they’ assumed to be generically masculine.”<sup>169</sup>

Going with the theme of love and sexuality, Beauvoir’s look at Sartre is a helpful dialogue in that it reveals the gender bias in Sartre. However, Beauvoir still leaves the dialectic intact where it becomes a Sartrean sexual game: “I will incarnate you in flesh and you will reveal my flesh for me. Woman’s body is already colonized by the hegemony of male desire; it is not *your* body.”<sup>170</sup> Such is the view of Beauvoir from this new brand of feminism.

What Irigaray argues against the older feminist tradition is that women are only legitimated or recognized only through masculine ideological commitments. To say that women should have equal treatment as men is to make women *into* men according to Irigaray, but there are differences between the sexes that give two perspectives, two knowledges, and two truths.

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<sup>169</sup> Lorraine, 104.

<sup>170</sup> Dallery, 199.

Invoking on specific knowledges or rationality is already sexed, but it is characteristically masculine. In *I Love to You*, Irigaray argues for a sexual identity that is on a par with civil identity: we recognize civil identity in society, now we must recognize sexual identity. “Upholding the rights of abstract citizens is not sufficient; since there are no neuter individuals, we need rights for real persons—that is, sexed persons.”<sup>171</sup> Indeed, we see no respect for difference in our society, religion, or politics (“fighting for equality,” “equal in the sight of God,” “one and the same in the eyes of the State”). Refusing sexual difference admits to a definition of one sex lacking in comparison to the other sex.

Why must Beauvoir look at a *comparison* between the sexes? “To whom or to what do women want to be equalized? To men? To a salary? To a public office? To what standard? Why not to themselves?”<sup>172</sup> Equality is a utopian idea which has its limits. We have seen men and women as one sex reduced to the other but one is lacking (i.e. man and not-man); never has identity been thought of in terms of difference, sexual difference. “Women’s exploitation is based upon sexual difference; its solution will come only through sexual difference.”<sup>173</sup> To get rid of sexual difference is what Irigaray wildly calls a genocide.<sup>174</sup> Having equality is good, but not *equal* to men. Women need to have their own subjectivity and freedom but in terms of their own objective rights.

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<sup>171</sup> Lorraine, 99.

<sup>172</sup> *JTN*, 12.

<sup>173</sup> *JTN*, 12.

<sup>174</sup> *JTN*, 12.

What has happened in the West is that our conception of human identity is “theoretically and practically wrong.”<sup>175</sup>

Under Beauvoir’s strategy, two loving people can work only if they have equal share in the relationship. No one dominates the other. Irigaray finds this wrongheaded. One reason is because—as Sartre states, loving the Other means that one desires to be loved—love is narcissistic. Irigaray later states that saying “I love you” differently is impossible because the masculine has given women a definition of lack. Under Freud, she must renounce the mother and her autoeroticism in order to love a man alone. Irigaray asks: how can she love a man without loving herself?<sup>176</sup> She must love, but with her identity. The female love of self has only been used in formation of man’s love of self. She has always provided for the self-love of man by being the mother that he renounced as a child. But “[w]ithout lips, there is no more ‘us’.”<sup>177</sup> Irigaray could have said without the couple, there is no us. They—the lips, the couple—are inseparable.

Man has always seen woman as the Other, but more importantly, it is *his* other, “and not as Otherness, as difference in her own right.”<sup>178</sup> Since woman has always been the other of man, woman has no other. She is always subordinated to man’s desires because she is the object of desire, the mirror of the other without having developed her own sense of subjectivity. It is because of this, Irigaray poses a new look at the relations between subject and object.

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<sup>175</sup> *ILTY*, 20.

<sup>176</sup> *An Ethics*, 66.

<sup>177</sup> *This Sex*, 208.

<sup>178</sup> Stanton, 74.

So for Irigaray, when a man has love for the other, the woman, he takes her as a narcissistic extension of the self. It is the base for his own subjectivity. Through tradition, we see the subject as the starting point and gender secondary. We see this with Descartes where he doubts everything away until he comes to the “I” that is the doubter. I have also shown that Beauvoir cannot take on this starting position because she cannot doubt her gender. For Beauvoir, gender is not a secondary ontology. Irigaray agrees with Beauvoir by thinking that the subject as the starting point is a false start. We must realize that we are two human genders. That is our starting point.

### ***Criticism of Essentialism***

Irigaray has been criticized for being an essentialist. That is, she is accused of focusing her ideas exclusively in a single characteristic of women by concentrating on the sexual differences (i.e. males and females). Thus, by looking at the differences between the sexes, the critics claim that Irigaray is giving men and women an essential character which the older generation struggled so hard to get rid of. By claiming essentialism, society would go back to the standards of women being inferior to men. However, the claim is due to a misunderstanding and misconception of Irigaray’s term “sexual difference.” Even Irigaray does not want to return to an essence: “When I say that we need to go back to the question of sexual difference, it is obviously not a call for a return to ‘genitality.’”<sup>179</sup> This “genitality” relates to the penis and the vagina. In other words, Irigaray does not mean to go back to genital or biological difference when she is talking about sexual difference.

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<sup>179</sup> *This Sex*, 142.



Could sexual difference mean gender differences? Again no. “[T]he process of identification with the masculine and feminine traits of the parent, which seems to evoke qualities in tune with the desire of the mother, will provide the child with the ready-made answers that will define for her or him a place in the social fabric. *Gender and its cultural expectations, obligations, and rituals are therefore one of the outcomes of Oedipal dynamics.*”<sup>180</sup> In short, there is a division in the subject between the unconscious and ego because of a threat of *jouissance* of the Other. Forming a gender merely displaces sexual difference; it does not solve the problem. Gender difference also generates problems from before where one sees the masculine gender and the one which is not masculine. “Any universal corresponding to a single gender or claiming to be neuter sins against spirit. And to sin against spirit is absolute.”<sup>181</sup> Sinning against spirit destroys the differences between the sexes.

Irigaray follows Lacan on what sexual difference is: sexual difference is a difference assigned in language; it deals with the relationship with the phallus: either the individual has it or is it.

As for the claim that she is aiming for heteronormativity, Irigaray replies that other sexual relationships are possible but

[w]e are begotten by woman and man, we live in a society of women and men. Whatever our sexual choice may be, we have to resolve the question of the two human genders’ cohabitation, in and with each other. Anyhow, in *I Love to You* I spell out how the relationship between woman/women and man/men can become non-hierarchical, non-instinctual. The book’s objective is to create a culture of

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<sup>180</sup> Feher-Gurewich, 197-198. My emphasis.

<sup>181</sup> *ILTY*, 147.

the relationship between genders. But this culture can become a model for a relationship in their diversity.<sup>182</sup>

Another reason taken from Bostic is that Irigaray has defined her audience as the couple.<sup>183</sup> Irigaray does so because she notices that the relationships between the sexes have been violent and unhealthy by reducing woman to the same which annihilates her. One must keep in mind that Irigaray does not claim that someone of the other sex must become my life partner. Love, for Irigaray, does not entail a sexual relationship. Irigaray theorizes love in terms of social relations instead of a focus on genital sex. Indeed, Irigaray would encourage us to learn to love both sides of genders regardless of sexual orientation. “Closing ourselves off from love for the other gender means refusing to rethink the structures of our society.”<sup>184</sup>

Perhaps another reason has to do with the interpretations of the texts themselves. Irigaray calls for sexed rights and claims that she is *sexuate*. Unfortunately, these do not translate to English easily. We tend to think of “sexed” and perhaps “sexuate” in terms of sexuality, in terms of the sexual act. However, to claim something that is sexed or *sexuate* means to think of the self as sexed. The terms are used to describe the human subject as an identity while thinking of the body. This helps us to think of “sexed” and “sexuate” as human identity. It does not necessarily entail heterosexuality.

How do we bring out the differences? How can we acknowledge them? Difference has been excluded from discourse not because it was buried, but because no one has thought about it and in its place was an ontological hierarchy. The history of

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<sup>182</sup> *WD*, 91.

<sup>183</sup> Bostic, 605.

<sup>184</sup> *Ibid.*

any profession has been male. With males being the dominant role, they have always thought of moving academia forward with no bias. Specifically, philosophy was so dominated by males that sexual difference was never mentioned until the previous century. “Philosophy took itself to be neither male nor female. It assumed the neutrality of its discourse precisely because there was never any reason to suspect that its discourse could be other than what it was.”<sup>185</sup> And what it was was exactly other. Without the possibility of sexual difference, the profession remains blind by male-dominated bias wherein difference is trivial. After all, why should these males think about their sex when it came to philosophy? Their maleness was not an issue. So how does one “jam the theoretical machinery?”

One of Irigaray’s methods was mimesis. As she states, “[o]ne must assume the feminine role *deliberately*.”<sup>186</sup> But why? Irigaray asserts that to take on a role that inflates the feminine undermines the masculine model. Mimesis tries to “recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it.”<sup>187</sup> It makes the invisible visible, by repeating the masculine logic. Woman can do this by taking images of woman from a man’s perspective but giving it back in magnified proportions. By miming, women can “*undo* the effects of phallogocentric discourse simply by *overdoing* them.”<sup>188</sup> By miming, one states exactly what the man has stated, but at the same time has said it in such a way that the man has not said it. In a way, it is a mockery of what the male philosophers have said by deconstructing their

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<sup>185</sup> Chanter, *Ethics of Eros*, 140.

<sup>186</sup> *This Sex*, 76. My emphasis.

<sup>187</sup> *This Sex*, 76.

<sup>188</sup> Moi, *Sexual/Textual Politics*, 140. This is taken from Tong, 204.

authority. An example from Tong would be if men view women as sex objects, then women should enlarge their breasts and walk into church on Sunday, fully naked as if to say “Look at me boys. This is what you wanted to see since these are on your minds. See if we care.” It is a playful exaggeration of the male fantasy. By parroting male’s fantasies, it becomes a parody. The mimesis is an unbridled mimicry. This reveals the destructive powers of males’ projections of woman. “Mimesis is the term Irigaray appropriates from the vocabulary of philosophy to describe her strategy, transforming woman’s masquerade, her so-called femininity into a means of reappropriating the feminine.”<sup>189</sup>

Another method is to have what she calls homoerotic relations with women, specifically with their bodies. This does not mean that the only appropriate sexual relation among women is lesbianism, but rather to gain a female sexual identity by overcoming the Oedipal hatred of the feminine and learn to love one another. This love would be different than love understood now through a Freudian framework, through mimicking masculine desire. By doing so, “women capable of loving one another for their own sakes have the autonomous identity needed to love men as ‘equals’.”<sup>190</sup> “Equals” here does not mean that men and women share an identical essence or nature. “Rather, Irigaray’s idea is that men and women must develop their own independent identities as male and female, identities that provide the basis for truly creative, nonexploitative interaction between the sexes.”<sup>191</sup> The economy of women has been

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<sup>189</sup> Schor, 66.

<sup>190</sup> Gutting, 348.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*

subsumed as an exchangeability. They have been seen as a commodity, a means, where the men trades the woman in order to establish better relationships with the other tribe.

To have sexual difference “released” would mean that everything is “back” to free play; fluidity was never thought of because we were used to the solidification of language, the masculine model’s ear is “so clogged with meaning(s).”<sup>192</sup> With free play, pleasure is never limited and everything is always moving, always open. Yet the masculine has made woman’s erogenous zones clitoral. But she does not have one or two sex organs; she has a whole bunch of them. Her sexuality does not have to be expressed clitorally or vaginally. One does not take over the other; they are both part of the intricacies of woman’s pleasure. The masculine model had to make language rigid, cutting off the possibility of free play. With everything being free play, nothing would be suppressed and everything would be pleasurable. It would give the possibility of a new language, a language where everything is not defined by a masculine model: “it could no longer, all by itself, define, circumscribe, circumscribe, the properties of anything and everything.”<sup>193</sup> What has happened is that man has been the subject of discourse in everything.

If these positive and negative poles are not found in both, the same one always attracts, while the other remains in motion but lacks a ‘proper’ place. What is missing is the double pole of attraction and support, which excludes disintegration or rejection, attraction and decomposition, but which instead ensures the separation that articulates every encounter and makes possible speech, promises, alliances.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> *This Sex*, 113.

<sup>193</sup> *This Sex*, 80.

<sup>194</sup> *An Ethics*, 9.

Separation is the key for sexual difference, but more importantly, acknowledgement of finiteness and limits. Both sexes need to realize this within sexual difference, but how do we do so? By “affirmation of the body.”<sup>195</sup> By perceiving and acknowledging the body as not an object, but as part of the relationship. However, this can be easily forgotten. The masculine sees her as an object, a place.

### *Against Sartre*

Because she is a place, she is a thing. Occasionally however, this thing talks; yet he ignores her. He gives her no subjectivity and since she is a place which makes her a thing in this intersubjective dynamic, man remains within a master-slave dialectic.<sup>196</sup> The reason why Sartre thinks that love relationships are conflictual is because he assumes that she is a place, a thing. Of course, this makes sense in Sartrean ontology because his whole point was to love a being-in-itself. However, Sartre could reply by stating that that is not what he is after; what he wants is the being-for-itself but he never obtains it. The lover can only do so by making consciousness into an object. While this may be true, Irigaray’s point is that the intersubjective dynamic only works with *two subjects*. Sartre has not provided that. He is only admitting one subject which encounters an object. There is no other for Sartre, only an Other—an object, a thing. This is where Irigaray relives Descartes’ view of wonder.

The initial interaction between the individuals would be wonder: we would always see them a *new*, something *very different* from what we knew. With wonder, there is no need for a fusion; we wonder at their excess and differentiation. “Thus man

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<sup>195</sup> *An Ethics*, 99.

<sup>196</sup> Cf. *An Ethics*, 10.

and woman, woman and man are always meeting as though for the first time because they cannot be substituted one for the other. I will never be in a man's place, never will a man be in mine. Whatever identifications are possible, one will never exactly occupy the place of the other—they are irreducible one to the other.”<sup>197</sup> But the passions have been reserved for other things or else repressed. The space of wonder is only left for the works of art, but never *between man and woman*. The magic has died and monotony takes its place or else “attraction, greed, possession, consummation [or] disgust.”<sup>198</sup> *Contra* Sartre, having wonder does not seize or possess the subject into an object. We have lost wonder and Sartre has forgotten this.

Before we think of appropriation, possessing or even seducing, there is wonder for “wonder is the appetite for knowledge of who or what awakens our appetite.”<sup>199</sup> We often tend to think that what we love is what we know and what we know is what is most familiar. Is it possible to wonder at what is most familiar? Irigaray answers yes because wonder always encourages attraction to something which impels us to go toward it even if there are differences. One can wonder what the other person is going to do next and be surprised what the outcome is. What Sartre lacks in his phenomenology is desiring the other in their difference.

We need to conceive of love as something wonder-full so that “the sexual encounter would be a festive celebration and not a disguised or polemical form of the master-slave relationship.”<sup>200</sup> “Sexual difference is, as it were, the most powerful motor

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<sup>197</sup> *An Ethics*, 12-13.

<sup>198</sup> *An Ethics*, 13.

<sup>199</sup> *An Ethics*, 78.

<sup>200</sup> *An Ethics*, 17.

of a dialectic without masters or slaves.”<sup>201</sup> The two of sexual difference gets us away from the master/slave dialectic. In other words, Sartre did not think about the sex of the other. Desiring for him is trying to find a gain from the relationship. After all, his desire is to make himself the whole world for the one he loves. Irigaray refuses the subject/object dichotomy. She states that recognizing the other still means respecting him or her as a subject. For Sartre, touching and caressing are modes of seduction; for Irigaray, touching invites teaching—wisdom—on how to continue becoming so that the lovers can approach each other in wonder. Both sides are involved. There may be a dialectic but it does not reduce one as master over the other. The dialectic must involve an other. Sartre can only see pleasure as an act of power. For Irigaray,

[t]he caress is no longer a gesture that aims to grab hold of the other, in his/her freedom, mystery, “virginity” or “integrity” (as is still the case with Sartre, Merleau-Ponty, Levinas). It becomes a gesture between two subjects, a gesture that gives each one (masculine and feminine) back to him/herself while creating a relationship between the two. In this way, the carnal relationship can become a love relationship in two and not a constant reduction of the one, and particularly the feminine one, to the other’s object or prey, unless it reduces the two subjects to nothing, to a zero tension in Freud’s words, a ‘little death.’<sup>202</sup>

The caress is a “reciprocal gesture capable of bringing about an awakening to another level of intersubjectivity.”<sup>203</sup> By appropriating the other, I possess the other and use him or her to tell me “I love you.” Thus, it reinforces the idea that I am loved and who I am.

What Sartre is forgetting is that the in-itself is the world of sensations. The for-itself is the universal according to Sartre.<sup>204</sup> Sartre may reject love, but he still holds on to the rubric of “true love” which the feminists typically find an overvaluation. He

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<sup>201</sup> *ILTY*, 51.

<sup>202</sup> *WD*, 115.

<sup>203</sup> *WD*, 165.

<sup>204</sup> Cf. *SG*, 116.



maintains the idea that the lovers involved must be equal in order for love to work. Why have that assumption? He is assuming that love should make lovers equal. Thus, love for Sartre is static because he does see love as an unreachng and unchangeable goal. What we need is a form of recognition that does get us into the master/slave relationship: we should see recognition not marked or revolved around hierarchy. Here, Sartre does not respect the other's transcendence according to Irigaray. "I respect you not so much because you are transcendent to your body, but because you are transcendent to *me*."<sup>205</sup> Sartre escapes the negativity by negating the in-itself. Irigaray formulates a new perspective. Instead, she states that the body—which Sartre would consider as facticity or in-itself—"already involves the for-itself."<sup>206</sup> The body is already consciousness. What does this entail? It means that the body does not need to negate itself; rather, the body returns to itself and cultivates that being: a sexuate body, a body that has consciousness which is his or her own. We need to be two instead of one + one which are abstract parts of a community. Where Sartre sees the other's consciousness as an object obstructing one's projects, Irigaray reminds Sartre that I am a consciousness only because of my relationship with and through the other. There is no fusion because the couple can respect each other's difference, make a space within each other. Whereas Sartre sees the not-being-you the heart of negation, Irigaray sees it as a security, a sigh of relief. It does not divide us into a subject who observes and an object that is observed. Sartre wants all barriers gone, Irigaray sees these barriers as a sanctuary.

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<sup>205</sup> *TBT*, 19. My emphasis.

<sup>206</sup> *TBT*, 30.

Does that mean that Irigaray wants a *we*? She does state that a *we* needs to be formed, but this *we* is not the typical *we* that we find in traditional society. This *we* “means being at least *two*, autonomous, different”<sup>207</sup> whereas it has been seen as bringing the two into one. We tend to go back to binary terms, where we reduce the subject into an object experiencing sensations and pleasures. The relationship does not consist of a subject and object but of two subjects where they both leave the subjectivity of the other intact. And here is where I will formulate love in Irigarayan terms.

### ***Love***

To love, one must begin with love of self. We do so by loving the other, but the “voyage” back to myself is not what Irigaray has in mind. That is a traditional view of love. “When you say I love you—staying right here, close to you, close to me—you’re saying I love myself. You don’t need to wait for it to be given back; neither do I. We don’t owe each other anything. That ‘I love you’ is neither gift nor debt. You ‘give’ me nothing when you touch yourself, touch me, when you touch yourself again through me. You don’t give yourself. . . ‘we’ has no place.”<sup>208</sup> What does Irigaray mean by this passage? Women have been seen as places for men: wombs, homes. Where does place fit in for woman if she is place? If woman is a place for man, then she is a *thing*. So what is the solution? Irigaray claims that if we construct a new form of ethics, an ethics of passion, then we can conceive of place and sexual difference in a new way. Indeed, the place is empty so it seems that this place is no-place. “If any meeting is to be possible between man and woman, each must be a place, as appropriate to and for the

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<sup>207</sup> *ILTY*, 48. Her emphasis.

<sup>208</sup> *This Sex*, 206.

other, and toward which he or she may move.”<sup>209</sup> The woman as place can only have things in her: man and at times a child. She has no place for herself, no space which she can call her own. The place that she has belongs to man. But Irigaray asks: would it not be better if man and woman enveloped one another without destroying each other’s envelopes?

To love someone traditionally is to place limits (the master/slave dialectic) but it is usually the woman who is limited. What happens is that he buys her a house and “shuts her up in it.”<sup>210</sup> He gives her clothes which conceals that nudity that is her. Her unlimitedness becomes bound. Instead, why not recognize sexual difference where we *acknowledge* each other’s differences, already knowing that both are limited when we encounter each other? Against the mainstream binary of reason/emotion where reason is the privileged term, “one should not have to give up love in order to become wise or learned. *It is love that leads to knowledge.* . . . It is love that both leads the way and is the path.”<sup>211</sup>

How does Irigaray see love? In “Sorcerer’s Love,” Irigaray describes love the way Diotima thinks of it: as always moving and in a state of becoming. *Love is the mediator:*<sup>212</sup> the intermediary *between* pairs of opposites: poverty/plenty, ignorance/wisdom, ugliness/beauty, dirtiness/cleanliness, death/life. Traditionally, the aim of love was procreation, but through Irigaray’s Diotima, love is already harmonious between the lovers by seeing the beauty. “It is not procreation that is beautiful and that

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<sup>209</sup> *An Ethics*, 40.

<sup>210</sup> *An Ethics*, 11.

<sup>211</sup> *An Ethics*, 21. My emphasis.

<sup>212</sup> Cf. *An Ethics*, 21 and 23 where Irigaray states that love is a daimon. This is reminiscent of the angelic form that is the feminine.

constitutes the objective of love. Love's aim is to realize the immortal in the mortal between lovers."<sup>213</sup> To realize the immortal in the mortal? What does that mean? It means "there is a creative and fecund interchange between two who are radically different from each other coming together in a union in which difference is not eradicated."<sup>214</sup> Immortality is a task that we have as mortals; we must constantly transmute because the body is always going through something new, something full of wonder. The body—as well as spirit—is continuously changing. Why mess that up with a child? Procreation of a child cannot become the goal of love because the love between the lovers loses its growth. According to Diotima, what we seek in love is the fruition of interaction, not reproduction; we seek in love the fecundity of dialogue, not a child. When it comes to sex, we automatically link it to reproduction. What has sexuality come down to? The aesthetic is lost; it all comes down to technique. Why not link it to a relationship between the sexes? She may want some good to come out of love, but the resulting "goods" are plural, not a possession of just one individual. We create the world instead of dividing it up. The love between the couple *is* the creativity, the process which we create new forms. These forms could be anything: an idea, a child, a theory, a method. But when these forms are thought of as a pre-existing ideal, the love is gone. The child is a false imagination of the parents, the idea is merely an abstraction, the theory is confused intellectualism, and the method is a means by which to have control. There is no *creator* and *created*, but two co-creators/created as living bodies. The third term that Irigaray asks for is "a place for love." Without this third term, there

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<sup>213</sup> *An Ethics*, 26.

<sup>214</sup> Lorraine, 38.

is no acknowledgement of differences. We are in a constant regrowth, thus the constant wonder between the lovers. Immortality that comes from a child is a false mask; the immortality is already within the lovers.

However, Socrates interprets Diotima as love having an ultimate goal: falling in love no longer constitutes a becoming of the lover himself, of love in the lover (male or female), or between the lovers, but is now the *teleological quest* for what is deemed a higher reality and often situated in a transcendence inaccessible to our mortal condition. A teleological goal makes love have a target outside the couple; it is now an individual's quest. With this idea in mind, love becomes a duty or a means for a higher purpose. Under traditional terms, woman's love is toward a man and child, but not *this* particular man, not *this* particular child. "She must love man and child as generic representatives of the human species dominated by the male gender."<sup>215</sup> Her love is a familial duty and is subjugated to reproduction and motherhood. The man, however, can love *this* woman with no qualms. But the purpose of love, its telos is "the accumulation of family capital."<sup>216</sup> Without the establishment of a family, without the coming of a child, the relationship is seen as a failed love. Love, in its full form, must come with a family under the tradition; otherwise, the couple has not shown its full potential as real lovers. If a man leaves, he can start over and move on. The woman however, must make herself available but still sacrifice her identity for the sake of the child as well as being a mother. Thus, love must come first from the couple, before the idea of a family comes to mind and to do so, there must be intersubjective desire. "In other words, male desire

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<sup>215</sup> ILTY, 21-22.

<sup>216</sup> ILTY, 23.

must become desire *for oneself* as man and *for the other* woman. . . . This realization takes place in the body proper and in the couple that man forms with the other sex—woman. The couple forms the elementary social community.”<sup>217</sup> But they do this task interdependently, the task is to have love through a “natural and cultural world engendered by women and men at a given moment in History.”<sup>218</sup> And “[t]he natural is at least two: male and female.”<sup>219</sup> “Authentic” love, according to tradition, can only be proven under the recognition of the State, religion, or some accumulation of property. Genuine love, however, does not truly exist now.

The love that Irigaray denounces is familial, in human goodness, knowledge, and institutional relationships. This kind of love is a wisdom ordering the city, but a constructive relationship between both the sexes would be to express their love for themselves and each other. Knowledge is linked to love. We should get it back to a love of wisdom which would give us a wisdom of love.

To use sex as a means for bringing children or forming a family is a perversion of love: it fails to clarify the attraction between the sexual couple. In other words, love for Irigaray would be free, a play of texts and bodies, without any institutions or establishments of doctrines, politics or commitment. If not, it is stuck in the masculine order. Thus the idea of a fusion of lovers but even through this, “lovemaking can only plunge him into a fusional loss of identity.”<sup>220</sup> Procreation of a child is not the aim, but

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<sup>217</sup> *ILTY*, 28. Her emphasis.

<sup>218</sup> *ILTY*, 32.

<sup>219</sup> *ILTY*, 35.

<sup>220</sup> Lorraine, 34. Quoting from Irigaray’s *Thinking the Difference* (99) from Lorraine, “The path to reciprocal love between individuals has been lost, especially with respect to eroticism. And instead of

procreation of beauty. The idea, however, is the immortality of the soul is privileged over the beauty of the body and we can see this in our society (“appearances are superficial; it’s what’s on the *inside* that matters”); we see that the immortality of the soul is privileged over the beauty of the body. What the man expects of woman is a child to carry on the name, thus immortality,<sup>221</sup> but what he never realizes is that the immortality is already in the love between them. If “[t]o fall in love, to become divine, or immortal, is no longer left to the intermediary current but qualified, hierarchized. . . [then] love dies as a result.”<sup>222</sup> The man wants the child to carry on the name, *his* name to provide a family, *his* family. Love no longer becomes something between man and woman but has made man superior in love.

Even marriage is seen as a goal for some contribution from the State. The contract of marriage makes the outcome of property, food, benefits, children, etc. But what about love? Where is love in the contract? Why even have a contract? “Under no circumstances should ‘marriage’ entail the loss of generic identity in a private or public institution. It is the engagement of two intentionalities to realize the finality of their gender.”<sup>223</sup> To realize the differences, we must not see each other as objects, but as an other, an other that has a body and his or her own world and an interiority that is specific to the other which we both respect and desire for what he or she is. Instead, “[t]he ‘marriage contract’ would then become a contract between two different civil persons

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contributing to individuation, or to the creation or re-creation of human forms, *eroticism contributes to the destruction or loss of identity through fusion. . .*” My emphasis.

<sup>221</sup> “Our subsequent tradition has even taught us that it is forbidden or futile to be lovers unless there is procreation, whereas Diotima had begun by affirming that the most divine act is ‘the union of man and woman, a divine affair’” (*An Ethics*, 30).

<sup>222</sup> *An Ethics*, 30.

<sup>223</sup> *ILTY*, 146-147.

who preserve their identity rather than losing it in the unity of the familial institution.”<sup>224</sup>

The love may constitute a “we” but this “we” is not a fusion where the people involved monitor each other by seeing who sacrifices more or less.<sup>225</sup> The ethical relations that Irigaray wants are where the exchanges are incommensurable. We can have reciprocity with incommensurability. A masculine look of subjectivity is immutable and univocal; the free play of Irigaray suggests that subjectivity is gendered, dynamic, and multivocal. The signifiers are always slippery.

But what is Irigaray getting at here with love? Is this free love? “So as not to remain fixed on a rare object, it is appropriate to turn voluntarily toward several objects. So as not to be attached to one *unique* woman, is it desirable to scatter oneself among *several*?”<sup>226</sup> Perhaps, but this does not mean free sex. What would reproduction and sex look like under Irigarayan terms? Irigaray answers using a different interpretation of the Virgin Mary as an example of a reciprocal love and sex:

The Annunciation is given the following rather univocal interpretation nowadays: Mary, you who are young and still a virgin, thus beautiful and desirable, the Lord, who has power over you, is informing you through his messenger that he wishes to be the father of a son to whom you will give birth. Mary can only say “yes” to this announcement because she is the Lord’s possession or his property. The mystery of the angel remains.

There is another possible interpretation: Mary, you who, from adolescence, are divine, because you were born of a woman faithful to herself—Anne, the one said to have conceived without sin—you who are thus capable of intersubjectivity, the expression of love between humans, do you want to be my lover and for us to have a child together, since I find you worthy of this even though you are young, inexperienced and without any possessions. It is only

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<sup>224</sup> *TBT*, 66.

<sup>225</sup> Indeed, Irigaray explicitly states that love is not a woman and man cut into two that Aristophanes portrays in Plato’s *Symposium*. What Irigaray states is that this already states that by having access to the other, we would have to be wounded. *An Ethics*, 54-55.

<sup>226</sup> *An Ethics*, 79.



your thanks to your *yes* that my love and my son may be redemptive. Without your word, we may not be carnally redeemed or saved.<sup>227</sup>

The touch comes even before the oral stage in Freud's psychosexual development. Through touch, the desire is not there because the intimacy of touching focuses on the dynamic relationship, not on a mode seduction. Waiting is possible so that through caressing, the caress comes back but in "full" form and strength, love. Through the caress, it speaks to me and I can speak back. For Irigaray, caressing does not seek to dominate the other as it does for Sartre. Instead, it opens upon a future, a future where new life is given to the lovers. The caress makes us acknowledge the differences; sameness makes the other inaccessible. Fluidity and porosity occur in difference.

The act of love is neither an explosion nor an implosion but an indwelling. Dwelling with the self, and with the other—while letting the other go. Remembering while letting the other be, and with the world. Remember the act not as a simple discharge of energy but for its characteristic intensity, sensation, color, and rhythm. The intensity would be or would constitute the dimensions of the dwelling, which is always in process. Never complete. Unfolding itself during and between the schedule of encounters.<sup>228</sup>

But if the woman is assigned to a place of non-human bareness—an object, a thing—love has no dwelling. There is a contact between the lovers and this contact makes the subjects go through constant transubstantiation. Unlike Sartre however, the other may be transcendent, but that does not mean that he or she is on different plane of existence and I must reach up there to make love possible. Rather, he or she has transcendence in the sense in which I cannot bankrupt the novelty of the other. With

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<sup>227</sup> *ILTY*, 140.

<sup>228</sup> *An Ethics*, 212.

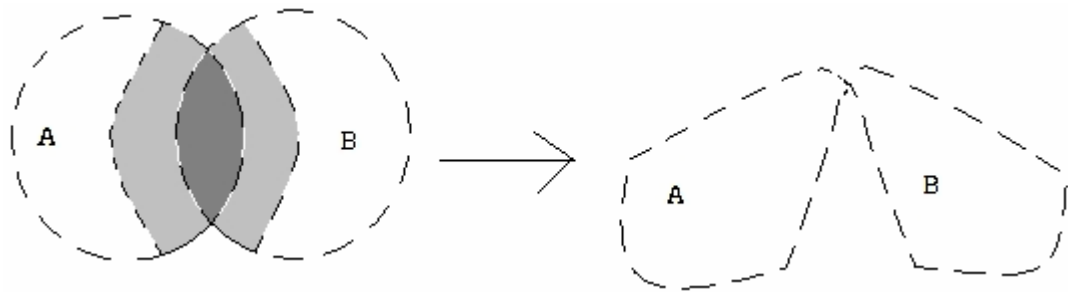
touch, the lovers are forming each other; the gaze is one-sided where the gazed upon has not given permission to be re-formed. With touch, there is a mutual fecundation: “the gift to each of the lovers of sexuate birth and rebirth.”<sup>229</sup> They are both lovers and beloveds. There will always be something new, something fresh, something original, something *different* with the other no matter how many times I encounter him or her. There will always be something that I have never anticipated.

In another passage, Irigaray mentions that mucous has to be thought about in order to think about the female. Through the mucous, hierarchical categories would diminish. What does the mucous have to do with sexual difference? Are they the same thing? Mucous certainly does have the connotation of getting rid of solid mechanics which leads toward the fluidity that Irigaray prescribes. Indeed, the mucous would “accomplish or reverse dialectic.”<sup>230</sup> Science has no concern for the fuzzy, half-open sets: the fluid sets. What would fluid sets look like in the case of love? Figure 4 shows what love is from an Irigarayan perspective. Notice that the end result shows that instead of the individuals coming together like the previous philosophers that we saw, the individuals actually move *away* from each other. This creates the independence of the subjectivities. However, because of love, there is a creation between them. The point where they touch is important because it shows the fluidity of the individuals. They can still love each other without consuming each other. Indeed, the hourglass figure could resemble two individuals barely kissing each other.

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<sup>229</sup> *An Ethics*, 202.

<sup>230</sup> *An Ethics*, 110.



**Figure 4: The Irigarayan Model.** Since the individuals are fluid, the sets A and B are open. There is an intersection of the individuals where the intersection is also fluid. This leads to an hourglass shape where there is a point touching between the two.

They affirm the otherness of the other. This happens through the caress, an elementary gesture. However, it looks as though there is still a fusion happening, but that is not the case. There are still two. “The loss of boundaries does not lead to a fusion in which one or the other disappears, but to a mutual crossing of boundaries which is creative, and yet where identity is not swallowed up.”<sup>231</sup>

In *I Love to You*, Irigaray points out that comprehending the other is not the goal. Indeed, the lovers will never ‘comprehend the other’ because it is not something that either of them *knows*. It is something each *grants*. But as Deutscher states, “[y]ou can know a good deal about what you cannot comprehend.”<sup>232</sup> There is no need to search for an object because within us, there is already a dialectic of subject and object. I recognize by loving you that you are not mine. Irigaray points out that from a male’s perspective, he views love as someone trying to love him: “I wonder if I am loved,” “I tell myself that perhaps I am loved” whereas the female is always reaching out: “Do you love me?” Thus, to never appropriate the other, one must not love the other because that

<sup>231</sup> Whitford, 167.

<sup>232</sup> Deutscher, 225.

creates the risk of possessing the other. Instead, I love *to* the other. What does the “to” do? The “to” makes communication possible. Irigaray notices that women tend to use “to” (*à*) in a relation of communication: to him, to you, to the other. Whereas men’s usage of “to” does not contain any exchange between people: *J’habite à Paris* (“I live in Paris”), *Nous sommes allés à la ville* (“We went into town”), *J’ai quelque chose à dire* (“I have something to say”), *Elle a à construire* (“She has to build”), *Je viens à apprendre* (“I come to learn”). Again, the word *entre* (between/among) is used as a relationship between people 65% of the time among women: “There is an atmosphere of intense curiosity among us,” “The distance between him and her was very slight,” “We are among friends.” The men, on the other hand use *entre* as a negative indication of the relationship 58% of the time: “There is such coolness between you and I,” “There are problems between us;” and men’s usage eliminates difference: “There is no difference between someone from the Netherlands and someone from Holland,” “Between is within,” “Enter without knocking, there’re no formalities between us.”<sup>233</sup> Women see difference as a space between that has a positive value; the men want to eliminate difference.

The word “together”: men use the word as an abstract collection and indeterminate; women use “together” where there are concrete individuals in the group frequently two individuals.<sup>234</sup> A sense of the future is more revealing for women for “the future often reveals a desire for communication.”<sup>235</sup> With the word “perhaps”, men

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<sup>233</sup> These examples are taken from *ILTY*, 85-86.

<sup>234</sup> *ILTY*, 93.

<sup>235</sup> *ILTY*, 94.

usually used it as a form of uncertainty or doubt: “Perhaps some would call that noise music,” “Perhaps she loves him,” “Perhaps I could have thought of something else;” women are more likely to use it as a way for opening up the future: “Perhaps I will go to my friend’s house to see her,” “Perhaps there will be a child in this house,” “Perhaps it is going to rain.” Women are more interested in communication whereas men are more interested in a “collectivity that is poorly defined but marked by the masculine gender.”<sup>236</sup> Women want communication but the only means to do so is through language; however, since men are in control of language, they only want to use language to denote reality. We need to cultivate a language so that it expedites an intersubjective communication rather than simply transmitting information. Men, however, want to see the world as subjects and objects. Unfortunately, everything out there is objects. The feminine sees relationships as two; the man sees relationships between the one and the many, between the I-masculine subject and others.

Recognizing each other means that we acknowledge that we are not whole and absolute. This is where Sartre and Beauvoir made a mistake. We can acknowledge that we are lacking, that we have a negative. But this negative does not constitute a need for it to be filled. “Respect for the negative, the play of the dialectic between us, would enable us to remain ourselves and to create an *oeuvre* with the other.”<sup>237</sup> Recognizing the negative means to accept each other’s limits and not to make one reducible to the other. The negative would have to operate differently. The negative takes on these forms: “I cannot know you,” “I cannot be you,” “You are not mine.” “As soon as I am

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<sup>236</sup> *ILTY*, 95.

<sup>237</sup> *ILTY*, 148.

sure that I know you, that I know what you will do next, I have stopped having a relationship with you and instead have a relationship with myself, with my own projection onto you. When I think that I know you, our relationship is over.”<sup>238</sup> For the masculine subject, “he would need to take into account the limit inscribed in nature: he cannot appropriate the natural in order to proclaim that he is the whole.”<sup>239</sup> Both the masculine and the feminine cannot have the whole in him- or herself. We can construct a world, *our* world with both of our tasks. We cannot completely identify with each other because we are not substitutable for each other. We are not equal, which entails that we are not the same; never can we be irreducible to each other. “Recognizing you means or implies respecting you as other, accepting that I draw myself to a halt before you as before something insurmountable, a mystery, a freedom that will never be mine, a subjectivity that will never be mine, a mine that will never be mine.”<sup>240</sup> Since I will never be her master, this enables her to come toward me because of attraction and wonder. No longer do we need to transcend each other to reach each other. “Transcendence is thus no longer ecstasy, leaving the self behind toward an inaccessible total-other, beyond sensibility, beyond the earth. It is respect for the other whom I will never be, who is transcendent to me and to whom I am transcendent.”<sup>241</sup> I am able to go towards a transcendence while remaining myself, without mistaking transcendence as spirit or soul. But since I will never reach the other, he or she forces me to remain my self, thus retaining and respecting the differences between us.

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<sup>238</sup> Oliver, *Witnessing: Beyond Recognition*, 210.

<sup>239</sup> Lorraine, 97.

<sup>240</sup> *ILTY*, 104.

<sup>241</sup> *ILTY*, 104.

Genuine love would focus on the relationship between the individuals. How it has been done is love is a means to (re)produce a child.<sup>242</sup> Thus we need a new way of saying “I love you” because “*I love you* risks reducing the other to the object of my love. This way: *I love to you*, or in you I love that which both is and becomes, that which is forever foreign to me. *I desire you* poses an even greater threat to an intersubjective relation than *I love you*.”<sup>243</sup> We do not need to desire an object as Sartre maintains. There is no desire *for* the other (as an object) but rather a desire *with* the other. This maintains full reciprocity without entailing a master/slave hierarchy.

“*I love to you* means I maintain a relation of indirection to you.”<sup>244</sup> We do not make one irreducible to the other. The “to” maintains an intransitive relationship for a transitive relationship makes the two into one. The “to” is a mediator between the couple. “The ‘to’ is the site of non-reduction of the person to the object. I love you, I desire you, I take you, I seduce you, I order you, I instruct you, and so on, always risk annihilating the alterity of the other, of transforming him/her into my property, my object, of reducing him/her to what is mine, into mine, meaning what is already a part of my field of existential or material properties.”<sup>245</sup> “The ‘to’ is an attempt to avoid falling back into the horizon of the reduction of the subject to the object, to an item of

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<sup>242</sup> It is ironic how a la Freud, the woman wants a child in order to have a substitute penis and a powerful sense of identity. Indeed, we see childless couples as culturally inferior. The child is a substitute because the woman thinks to herself that she wanted a penis from her childhood. She cannot have her father’s, so she must get it through another way: through the husband. The baby would be a sign that the woman had the penis as well as the woman herself may feel she has gained a penis to which she endows to her baby (particularly if the baby is a male).

<sup>243</sup> *ILTY*, 138. Her emphasis.

<sup>244</sup> *ILTY*, 109. Her emphasis.

<sup>245</sup> *ILTY*, 110.

property.”<sup>246</sup> By having the couple revolve around themselves without possessing or consuming the other, both subjects are aware of the contributions to the couple of sexual difference so that love can occur. The “to” is the supporter of the intentions of both subjects in the relationship; it is the inalienable space between us. It is where I and the other can meet. Love is between us which is the invisible bond through the negative, which is not nothing. The “to” adds movement in the between. In Sartrean terms, the “to” makes sure that there is a place of transcendence between us, a place of respect and possible alliance. “You do not, then, find yourself reduced to a factual thing or to an object of my love, and not even to an ensemble of qualities, which make you into a whole perceivable by me. Instead, I stop in front of you as in front of an other irreducible to me: in body and in intellect, in exteriority and interiority.”<sup>247</sup> No need to make the Other an absolute, stop and recognize the other as other. The negative in sexual difference means to recognize the irreducibility of the other. I do not need to make space for the other. The other has her space and I have mine. There is no need to invade each other’s space. What Irigaray suggests is that in traditional relationships, someone is always trying to occupy the middle ground instead of letting the negative be.

And finally, another way to respect the other is to see the other as a mystery. To do so would mean to see the other *qua* other and not object. I will not subject the other to my laws, to my world. By seeing the other as a mystery, I can combine ethics and truth in my relationship with the other, but also realizing that this truth will never be mine because it is a mystery. Yet, respect for a truth modifies my—our—relationship

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<sup>246</sup> *ILTY*, 111.

<sup>247</sup> *TBT*, 19.



with the truth. “The other, whose mystery will never be a shared secret, the other who will always remain a mystery to me, is the other of sexual difference.”<sup>248</sup> For Sartre, the caress continues until he sinks into the abyss of love. Not so for Irigaray. With caressing, Irigaray sees new possibilities open which reveals and re-reveals the mystery that is the other. The mystery is a new birth of the other and with caressing is a constant wonder at the other.

Lovemaking through sexual difference does not entail an acknowledgement of corporeality in both partners, but a kind of love that could redevelop the whole culture. Irigaray has suggested that starting from the loving couple; one could eventually build a democratic society that is built out of love. It is a love that could get rid of the *war between the sexes* and finally find peace. “Love between us, women and men of this world, is what my save us still.”<sup>249</sup>

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<sup>248</sup> *TBT*, 111.

<sup>249</sup> *ILTY*, 32.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

One can still add on to this thesis. The dialogue among these philosophers is far from over. But I have shown a road on how to rethink our subjectivity, autonomy and of course, love. We traditionally think of the subject as an autonomous and separate being in the sense where one is not dependent on other people, where one is free to control and command oneself. Other people seem to be a threat because they place limits, boundaries and expectations of us. Indeed, so much so that philosophy has regarded emotions, particularly love, opposing the rational freedom of the self. Love has been seen as a hindrance on the self because it has been viewed as a dependence on other people as well as abandonment from one's autonomy. Certainly, Sartre is the prime example of this. Sartre stays within the tradition of the fusion model of love, but concludes that the ending or goal of love is impossible. He therefore concludes that love is impossible. But the thought never occurred to him to think of a different model.

Someone like Irigaray proposes such a model. Love is one of the most important connections to have with other people. Not just in the intimate realm, but in the public. "What is fundamental for human beings, then, is not their self-involvement or their success in controlling others, but their affirmative connection and involvement with each other. For it is the latter that provides us with the possibility of personal development, and in the love of another such personal growth may be enhanced to the highest degree."<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>250</sup> White, 47.

Love has always been seen as a form of domination and control, usually the male over the female. As time passes on, philosophers have made love into an ahistorical and asocial category. By moving from Sartre to Beauvoir to Irigaray, there is a slow shift from love as conflict to love as a connection. As Beauvoir and Irigaray suggest, love should be nonhierarchical. Yet, it is Irigaray who sees love *between* the two where the between connects and separates the lovers. By reconceiving love, one can transform ethical, political, and social relations. Love is the ethical strategy to *move* toward others, across the differences which is why Irigaray suggests loving toward you, and I love *to* you.

The traditional game of love starts with an overlapping of individuals where they share common features. Over time, they begin to fuse. The fusion, according to tradition, has a culmination where the lovers are perfected into an ideal form of love. Sartre, however, sees the traditional model and shows that the game has no stopping point; it is in continual play without end. As this model suggests, love is—as Sappho would say—bittersweet.<sup>251</sup> Such the tragedy of love.

Beauvoir interacts with Sartre and claims that the game may continue without end, but there is a way to end the game and have a fusion of sorts. Her conception of ending the game is by making the woman have independence and status as does the man. It has been seen as the man subsuming the women within the fusion. The man dominates the women which would entail sadomasochism. Beauvoir's response to Sartre is to make the individuals both equal; there would be no mastery, no domination,

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<sup>251</sup> Cf. Carson, *passim*.

and no possession. If there happen to be any differences, the couple would try to get rid of them, ignore them, or confront them with stressful results. They would be equal under their own terms. Without equality, the game of love is torturous.

To relook at a problem and to fix it is a practical solution. To reject the problem altogether is to do something completely different. Irigaray proposes to do something completely different. Her concentration is to look at the differences. Her model of love rejects any form or rubric of the traditional model. By looking at the differences, we can see how the other will never become ours. The other is incommensurable from us and we must respect that. The differences make love; finding commonalities tends to ignore the differences. For Irigaray, there is no need to rework the traditional model because the traditional model needs to be rejected. The union does not culminate love; the union is annihilation. Focusing on the differences forms a new model of love where the concentration is on the betweenness of the couple itself and not the grindings of the fusion where one individual must succumb to the other in order to fuse. The difference moves us. Without difference there would be no movement. And without difference, there would be no love.

Wittgenstein replied that the purpose of philosophy was to show the fly out of the fly bottle.<sup>252</sup> Irigaray does so by finding a way out of this dilemma not with a solution, but with a resolution. We have lived our love lives by, at best, integrating each other. That is not good enough. There is no *meeting* each other. An untranslatable word describes this new conception of love: auto-affection. It is a “gesture for a return to

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<sup>252</sup> Wittgenstein, §309.

oneself, in oneself, a becoming oneself which does not stay in suspension in immutable truths or essences but which provides a faithfulness to oneself in *becoming*.”<sup>253</sup> Love is not about giving or receiving to/from the other. It is about *meeting* the other, by looking at the between of the couple and not *this* individual loves *that* individual. This gesture notes that there is a gap because of the differences between us, but this gap is never to be filled. This gap is made for dwelling. To form a union would destroy the gap and thus the destroy the dwelling. Without this auto-affection, “we fall back into fusion or into couples of opposites whose relation will be governed by hierarchy, submission of the one to the other, sado-masochism.”<sup>254</sup> In other words, that will only lead to Sartre’s view. There is no escape from Sartre according to the traditional view. Instead of working within the tradition, one should conceive of love that is based on the couple. The other should remain flesh and becoming instead of an idealization of love.

But one could say that the gap would be nothing. The nothingness should be filled. The gap has been seen as a disastrous thing for lovers. But my question is why? Why does the nothing have to be filled? We often view the nothingness as a negative thing, but Irigaray suggests that this is reworked to a positive labor. The negative has the phrases: “I cannot know you,” “I cannot be you,” “I will never master you,” but these negative phrases allows relationships. “As soon as I am sure that I know you, that I know what you will do next, I have stopped having a relationship with you and instead

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<sup>253</sup> *WL*, xiv. My emphasis.

<sup>254</sup> *WL*, xv.

have a relationship with myself, with my own projection onto you. When I think that I know you, our relationship is over.”<sup>255</sup> We must come to terms with our own limits.

The nothingness between enables us to meet. The gap does not need to be filled; that was the assumption from anyone who has been in love or wants to be in a loving relationship. The idea was to come together declare their love for each other. But where’s the space between the lovers? Where is the dwelling? Where is the moment where the lovers can meet each other through the touch? The gaze may act as a mediator from one individual to another, but the gaze has no reciprocity. Vision has no intimacy, no connection. The touch is always a moment of communication, always creating a relationship. Recognition makes us aware of the differences between us instead of viewing one opposed or against the other. We are inaccessible to each other but able to communicate because of what is between us: Nothingness. Yet the space between us is not nothing, it is an invisible bond for us to communicate. The Nothingness should not be ignored because the Nothingness is not nothing.<sup>256</sup> The bond, the space between, the gap is what makes love possible.

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<sup>255</sup> Oliver, “The Look of Love,” 64.

<sup>256</sup> Cf. *WL*, 174.

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