Making Our Freedom

Feminism and ethics from Beauvoir to Foucault

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Except where otherwise acknowledged, this thesis describes my own research and analysis

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Abstract

This thesis examines the possibilities for feminism that arise from the work of Michel Foucault, which I explicate by comparison it with humanist existentialism. I begin with The Second Sex, Simone de Beauvoir's application of existentialism to women. I expose the problems that arise in Beauvoir's project. Woman's body is an obstacle to her transcendence, and further, she must abandon her feminine desires and values, and accommodate herself to masculine patterns if she is to overcome her immanence and subordination. To understand why such problems recur in The Second Sex, I turn to Sartre's Being and Nothingness. After examining the conceptions underlying his thought, I conclude that his philosophy is unable to encompass difference, and is therefore antithetical to the feminist project.

Foucault's philosophy offers solutions to these problems by eliminating consciousness as universal subject of action, and by making subjectivity a product of time, through showing how subjects are formed though the changing effects of power upon bodies. His thought encompasses difference at a fundamental level, through understanding human beings as particular 'events' in time. I argue that Foucault's philosophy does not depend fundamentally, as does Sartre's, upon woman as Other.

Foucault shows how our particular historical form of rationality, created within power relations, sets limits on what we can think, be and do. He shows how thought can overcome some of these limits, allowing us to become authors of our own actions. Misunderstandings are common, particularly of his conception of power and its relation to subjectivity. Many commentators demand changes that reinstate the concepts he fundamentally rejects. Others do not see the unity of his philosophy. I show its importance to women's emancipation and to a feminist ethics.

Finally, I compare Foucault's thought with feminism of difference. With the help of Heidegger, I argue that Foucault offers a superior but complementary way to know who we are, through understanding the history of our making. I show how the masculine and the feminine can be reconciled through a reconceptualisation of the relation of sex to time. All told, Foucault is a philosopher of freedom and for him the practice of freedom is an ethics.
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Many thanks are due to my early supervisors, Moira Gatens and Paul Patton, who helped me settle into the unfamiliar environment of Canberra and the unaccustomed study of philosophy. I thank Moira especially for introducing me to Spinoza and Nietzsche, whose perceptions I have found invaluable to a deeper understanding of Foucault. I thank Paul for sharing his discerning insights into Foucault and for introducing me to Deleuze, another useful intersection with Foucault.

I was introduced to Foucault and to the exploration of the question of the other in my honours year in Adelaide by Michael Dutton. His enthusiasm for this kind of inquiry showed me that here indeed was something to be teased out, and his tentative approach was invaluable in teaching me that knowledge cannot be taken for granted. I thank him, too, for his encouragement and his confidence in my abilities. I also thank Chris Falzon for generously sharing his knowledge of Foucault in many animated conversations. Beverley Shallcross, the Departmental Administrator at ANU, deserves special thanks and acknowledgement for her unflagging helpfulness and respect for the other.

Most of all, I thank Richard Eves for his encouragement and understanding, for numerous helpful references, and for demonstrating that it is possible to have a relation with the other that avoids subjecting difference to the law of the Same, and so allows it to be. I also thank my son Tom for a similar generosity of spirit which has sustained me during the time of this work.
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Simone de Beauvoir and Michel Foucault might seem a rather odd couple, and in many respects this is indeed so. It is unlikely that Foucault ever read *The Second Sex*. If he had, perhaps he would have been amused to see that Sartre's existentialism, which he opposed, could not be successfully applied to one half of humanity, despite Beauvoir's most strenuous efforts. I say it is unlikely because Foucault was not one to touch upon feminist issues, except rarely - and then often ineptly. Still, Beauvoir and Foucault had in common a very strong and central concern for human freedom as an ethical endeavour. Both believed that freedom and ethics were intimately linked, and that the achievement of an ethical existence required active effort rather than passive acceptance. But even in these similarities they had essential differences, and it is the significance of these differences for women's freedom that I want to show here.

This thesis is intended to serve two purposes. On the one hand, it is concerned with the possibilities for feminism that arise from the work of Michel Foucault. This is presented as a critique of and an alternative to humanism, and, in particular, to the existentialist argument of Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*. I argue that Foucault's theory offers solutions, not only to the problems of *The Second Sex*, but to some longstanding problems in feminist theory and practice.

On the other hand, it is intended to serve a somewhat similar purpose to the personal notebooks of ancient Greece, the *hypomnemata*, which, according to Foucault, were collections of writings to be used for the project of making oneself differently. Quite unlike the modern use of writing with the object of discovering who one really is, this knowledge was accumulated towards achieving certain ideals. The aim was to become a person who, rather than being governed by exterior forces or the power of others, was self-governed. Of course this thesis is not personal in the same way as the *hypomnemata* but, somewhat in the same spirit, it is an argument meant to facilitate change - towards women (and men) making themselves differently, and becoming self-constituting and self-governing - and towards change in feminist directions and practices.
The *hypomnemata* did include knowledge of the self, not for modern therapeutic purposes but as a necessary basis for making oneself differently. A large part of the thesis is devoted to understanding and criticising some of the ideas from which feminism has been constructed. This need to know what we are in order to become something else is why I begin this 'archaeology' with an investigation of *The Second Sex*. This, of course, is only one source of present-day feminism, but Simone de Beauvoir is known as 'the mother of us all' for good reason. Many beliefs similar to hers continue to be incorporated in important and influential sections of feminist thought and practice today. Her work also participates in a particular philosophical movement, humanist existentialism, which was strongly repudiated by a later generation which included Foucault, whose work I investigate in the third and fourth chapters of my 'hypomnemata'.

For a reader unfamiliar with existentialist thought, *The Second Sex* is a puzzling book, and it is Beauvoir's ambivalences and contradictions that I bring to light in chapter one. Perhaps the most significant example of this for feminism is her ambivalence towards the female body. For example, she doubts that pregnancy can ever be more than a second-rate activity, but also insists that the facts of the body have no significance until they are given meaning. There are other puzzles as well. Although few feminists would deny that serving others and economic dependency has allowed men to oppress women, it is not clear why Beauvoir links this so sweepingly to the notion of transcendence over the given, why she despises women's traditional work in the home, why women are blamed for their oppressed state, or why they must be 'assimilated', to become like men.

The key to such puzzles lies in the philosophical basis of Beauvoir's work, but, since she herself does not explain this in any detail, it is necessary to turn to the work where it is spelled out - Jean-Paul Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*. In chapter two, then, I investigate the obstacles to finding a means of emancipating woman through a humanist philosophy, despite the fact that this is a philosophy preoccupied with freedom. I conclude that these problems are very serious - that in fact Sartre's philosophy in *Being and Nothingness* cannot embrace women's emancipation, and that a very different philosophical outlook is needed if this is to be achieved.

In restricting my study of Beauvoir and Sartre almost entirely to *The Second Sex* and *Being and Nothingness*, my aim is to separate out the core aspects of these works that are antithetical to women's emancipation and to an ethical feminism. My object has been to present a type of thought, rather than to present a general overview of the work of these two philosophers.1 As will become clear, my own theoretical inclination is anti-humanist, but I do not deny that their work

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1. There is a very large literature giving broad overviews of Sartre. Dominick LaCapra (1987) gives a fair and penetrating assessment.
was an advance towards understanding human being as constituted in the world, and that in the cause of liberation it has been inspiring to many.

In my view it is unfortunate that Beauvoir finally gave too little weight to her view that humans are not natural beings and are not isolated individuals, but make their choices, act and so construct their identities within the general social framework (EA:71). This is particularly so considering that she herself shows in *The Second Sex* how influential and complex are the social forces within which woman constructs herself. On the question of respect for an 'older sister', I cannot do better than quote Irigaray:

> To respect Simone de Beauvoir is to follow the theoretical and practical work for social justice that she carried out in her own way; it is to maintain the liberating horizons which she opened up for many women, and men ... She certainly found part of her inspiration for these during her long and often solitary walks in the countryside, in nature. It seems to me that her concern for and writings on this subject are a message not to be forgotten (1993:13-14).

Foucault was a member of a generation of philosophers who constructed their thought in direct response to the humanist existentialism of which Jean-Paul Sartre was probably the leading French exponent, and so the link between Beauvoir and Foucault is Sartre. It is not surprising, then, that the same problems that I find in *The Second Sex* and in *Being and Nothingness* are addressed by Foucault. I explain his approach and how he solves these problems in chapters three and four. It is in this part of the thesis that the more constructive aspect of my 'hypomnemata' begins to be revealed, through Foucault's suggestions for how we might conceive of ourselves and the world differently.

For clarity, I divide my writing on Foucault into two parts, although these are in fact interdependent. In general, chapter three deals with the relations between self and exterior world, at the same time defining what that self is. For Foucault, the human subject is made within culturally specific forms of knowledge and practice, themselves forged through the operation of power relations. Although there is now considerable familiarity with this aspect of his work,

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2. Feminists have hotly disputed at great length over *The Second Sex*. Toril Moi (1994) strives to defend Beauvoir against her critics, whom she feels have been 'far more hostile than might reasonably be expected' and have allowed their 'preconceptions or prejudices to shape their perceptions' (1994:77). I disagree if, as sometimes is the case, Moi considers a different philosophical stance to be 'prejudice'. See, for example, Moi's caricature of Irigaray's position on Beauvoir (Moi 1994:183; Irigaray 1993:10-14). It is not, as Moi believes, that Beauvoir's critics generally misrecognise her project and judge her by an 'alien standard'; rather the project is recognised and found wanting as a means of liberation (Moi 1994:184).

3. Sartre later tried to recognize the influence upon the individual of the social world, and of language, more fully. This change in his thought became obvious after Beauvoir's publication of *The Second Sex* (see, for example, Silverman, 1980), and was possibly influenced by her difficulties in applying it to women.
misunderstanding is not uncommon, particularly of his particular conception of power and its relation to subjectivity. Many commentators praise aspects of his work yet demand improvements or additions that reinstate the very concepts that he fundamentally rejects. Perhaps the best example of this is his rejection of the transparent, self-reflexive, constituting subject, a loss bewailed by critics, in their concern for agency. For them, it is an either/or question: either humans constitute themselves and the world or they are constituted by it. As they see it, this constituting subject is the source of independent thought and action and its loss means that human beings have lost all freedom to act independently, a serious problem for social theorists concerned with freedom. Another example is a demand for the normative guidance which Foucault so studiously avoids providing. Since I insist that Foucault's work should not be seen as divided between the 'useful' earlier genealogical material on discipline and bio-power, and the later material on the aesthetics of the self that can blithely be rejected, I aim to show how the two parts are connected, and the importance of both to women's emancipation and to ethics. At the conclusion of this chapter, I argue that from Foucault's understanding that there is no ultimate truth of human being it follows logically that an ethical relation to the other must be concerned with difference.

Chapter four deals with the second of the two sets of relationships involved in the question of women's freedom, the internal relation of power between self and self, the way that we act upon our own actions. Foucault agrees with Beauvoir and Sartre that we cannot be free if we are at the mercy of the beliefs, emotions and desires which have been created in us without our knowledge or consent. For him, the tyrant and the slave are both not free and not ethical subjects (1988:8). However, unlike Beauvoir and Sartre, Foucault avoids making individuals culpable for their own plight or for the state of the world. Avoiding moral persuasion, he moves beyond the concept of good and evil, considering instead what is good for us and what is bad. He suggests that we seek freedom through actively taking part in the making of ourselves, that we intentionally construct ourselves as 'works of art'. I argue, against critics who take this to be a move towards egotistical and frivolous self-indulgence, that this constitutes an ethical relation to self which is the ground of possibility of an ethical relation to others. Foucault is a philosopher of freedom and for him the practice of freedom is an ethics.

In my concluding chapter, I discuss what my understanding of Foucault means for feminist theory and practice today. I look critically at the feminist pursuit of identity for women in terms of an essential difference. I conclude that feminism of difference uses concepts of identity and representation that come uncomfortably and unnecessarily close to the humanist oppositional thought that has subordinated us in the modern era. I argue that this is not a good strategy. There are other ways of knowing who we are, and Foucault offers a better alternative. It is better for women to understand themselves as particular beings in time - as creatures of history. This, I argue, not only frees women of the
oppositional form of representation in which we are caught, but also frees us to become authors of ourselves.

Finally, to throw some positive light upon how we might make our freedom, I turn first to Heidegger, one of Foucault's acknowledged mentors, to heighten and sharpen our understanding of Foucault's thought. Heidegger offers a depth of understanding of man's relation to time which Foucault has taken up, but which is difficult of access without reference to Heidegger. Through Heidegger's conceptions of dwelling and Being, I reinforce the importance of Foucault's emphasis upon the practise of genealogy - of knowing who we are through knowing how we have been made in time. I also consider what it is that women might seek in making themselves differently. Then, through a reflection upon the relation of the masculine and the feminine to time, I draw out the essential part played by the concept of time in Foucault's thought. Through this, I summarise what Foucault can tell us about the problem of the relation between the sexes in Western thought and culture today.

New stuff:
The problem of freedom versus cultural determinism that has been grappled with by feminist thinkers from Beauvoir to the present day. ‘Why is woman so submissive?’ was Beauvoir’s testy question. As Judith Butler puts this, 'how are we to understand the constitutive and compelling status of gender norms without falling into the trap of cultural determinism?' (Bodies that Matter, p. x). Foucault suggests that when we are faced with an impossible question such as this we should sidestep it. The cultural is a product of time. It is through considering the relation of gender to time that the impasse of determinism can be forestalled.

Situating human being in time has great ethical effects: no longer can we appeal to the higher authority of God, precedent, or Man for direction. Many find this is a disturbing prospect, but I will show that it is, rather, a great opportunity for freedom and for choosing ethical practices that apply effectively to the particular dilemmas of our present time.
A feminist reader attempting to make sense of *The Second Sex* cannot but find it confusing. Read as a feminist text, it displays a strange antipathy, even disgust, towards women, and appears, much of the time, to put the blame for their situation almost entirely upon them. Yet at other times it states explicitly that women have been forced into being as they are. It is not surprising that feminist writers have also been divided in their reactions to *The Second Sex*; some have been strongly antipathetic while others have regarded Beauvoir warmly as the founder of modern feminism and have defended her strenuously. In this first chapter I want to show the contradictions and problems that are to be found in *The Second Sex*. At the same time, I do not want to deny the value of Beauvoir’s insights or the richness of her descriptions of feminine behaviour and experience. It is, after all, easy to criticise in retrospect. Although I am critical, Beauvoir’s achievement was great, and it is because of her willingness to take risk in stating her views that we have such a telling basis for constructing a better understanding of women’s predicament.

Beauvoir’s aim is for women to become autonomous subjects in control of their own destiny. Although they may want to qualify it, most feminists would agree that this is also broadly their aim. What I want to consider in this chapter and the next is whether Beauvoir’s understanding of the problem is adequate and whether the solution she offers is satisfactory, in both practical and ethical terms.

1. Among the antipathetic, see Dallery, 1985; Evans 1985; Hekman 1991. Among the defenders, see Kruks 1992; Zerilli, 1992; Singer, 1985; Moi, 1994. For Duchen, Beauvoir was the ‘symbolic mother of more than a generation of feminists’ (1986:165).
Could Beauvoir’s prescription for women actually result in their emancipation? In her ideal society, what would be the basis of relations between self and other? What notions of justice and equality would exist, and how would the particular needs of women be recognised? Before beginning to deal with these questions, I will explain how Beauvoir understands woman to be constituted.

**Self And Other**

Like Beauvoir herself, I begin with the symbolic relation of woman to man. This is a particularly important aspect of Beauvoir’s theorisation because it is concerned with the relation of self and other, and thus with difference. It is a schema that is often taken to be the only possible conceptualisation of the constitution of self, and so is often seen as posing a knotty problem, concerning feminine subjectivity. I will be returning to it in later chapters.

Beauvoir follows Hegel in presuming the fundamental necessity of the category of the Other, through which, and in opposition to which, self-consciousness is able to constitute itself (SS:17). This relation, she says, is usually reciprocal, at least between men. The other ego, too, assumes the position of essential subject in opposition to what he constructs as the inessential other (SS:17). As Hegel puts it, self-consciousness exists ‘in and for itself ... only in being acknowledged’ (Hegel, 1977:#178). This is possible even though this other is constructed as non-essential, because self-consciousness recognises itself in the other (#179).

In the case of the sexes, Beauvoir finds that the reciprocity posited by Hegel does not occur. Woman does not place herself wholly in the subject position in opposition to man, but, as Beauvoir makes clear, it is up to her to do so. As she says, ‘it is not the Other who, in defining himself as the Other, establishes the One. The Other is posed as such by the One in defining himself as the One’ (SS:18). So, the fact that man sets woman up as his Other in order to pose his selfhood, his subjectivity, should not mean that woman must see herself as Other, but, rather, that she should pose him as Other in order to establish her own subjectivity. At this stage we do not know what has caused this failure, but we do know that the individual being is always responsible for its own making. As Beauvoir says, ‘If woman ... never becomes the essential, it is because she herself fails to bring about this change’ (SS:19).

Hegel’s story of self-consciousness’ self-becoming is not simply an innocuous ‘game’ in which active and passive roles are interchanged. Rather, it is

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3. Hegel's discussion of the construction of self is far more complex than this, but a more extensive account is not necessary to my purpose here.
a drawn out and complex dialectical series of developments, in which each struggling protagonist ‘must seek the other’s death’ (#187). Beauvoir accepts and emphasises this violent confrontation, saying for example that ‘we find in consciousness itself a fundamental hostility towards every other consciousness; the subject can only be posed in being opposed’ (SS:17, emphasis added). Judith Butler describes this as self-consciousness constituting its subjectivity through constant effort to assimilate external difference into itself (see Butler, 1987:6). Assimilation, a kind of devouring of the other, is, of course, a violent act.

Beauvoir takes it to be a fundamental human characteristic that we resist being enslaved through being objectified by the other, reflecting a need to be subject in control of one’s own destiny. It is notable that this understanding of the process of self-creation denies any primary role for the social world. Beauvoir begins her analysis with two individuals confronting each other in some primal world, empty of other human beings and of the effects of their presence. This raises the question of to what extent, and at what level of their construction, people are to be regarded as social beings. Further, we might begin to consider what kind of ethics is to be derived from Beauvoir’s assumption that a fundamental hostility towards the other results from the human desire for freedom.

It is far from insignificant that Hegel’s two protagonists are implicitly male and that women enter only into another, smaller, story, as described below, for Beauvoir herself accepts this deprecation of the feminine. Genevieve Lloyd agrees that Hegel’s depiction of the ‘struggle for sustained self-consciousness is really one between male selves and [male] others’ (1984:92). So, for Hegel, the question of woman and her freedom of choice does not arise in the same context as self-consciousness’ self-creation.

In the *Phenomenology*, when the two consciousnesses confront each other:

Each sees the other do the same as it does; each does itself what it demands of the other, and therefore also does what it does only in so far as the other does the same. Action by one side only would be useless because what is to happen can only be brought about by both (#182, emphasis deleted).

Now, as Hegel makes clear, this is a double movement (#181) carried out between equals: ‘For the other is equally independent and self-contained, and there is nothing in it of which it is not itself the origin’ (#182). Not only does this raise even more insistently the question of the independence of the subject, but it

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4. I am disagreeing with Butler who takes Hegel’s subject to be ‘clearly without recognisable gender’ (1987:20). Hegel’s opposition takes for granted rather than explicitly states that the independent consciousness confronting man is male, but more cogent is the fact that he sees woman as created in a different dialectical movement from man (see #444-760).
simply does not work if we take it that the confronting consciousnesses are man and woman. If woman emerges from this encounter as the inessential to man’s essential, then either woman was not independent in the first place (which Beauvoir denies), or the double movement has not taken place because one (or both) consciousnesses have not reciprocated, in which case both man and woman continue to see their selves as reflections in the other - that is, they remain dependent.

Beauvoir agrees with the latter reading, saying that while men relate to men in a mutual, or reciprocal manner, men and women do not. Thus men, between themselves, have a mutual regard for the subjectivity of the other, but woman remains as absolute Other, and as property to be handed between men (SS:102-3). Man is dependent upon woman, but his dependence is more akin to a slaveowner’s upon a slave, where the owner remains in control of the means of satisfying his own needs (SS:20). Woman, meanwhile, has no means of reciprocal recognition, the more so because women lack the concrete means of mutual recognition between themselves, because they ‘live dispersed among the males, attached through residence, housework, economic condition, and social standing to certain men ... more firmly than they are to other women’ (SS:19).

Hegel sees woman as created in a different dialectical movement from that described above for man. What is relevant to the present discussion is that woman is seen as embodying a less advanced stage of consciousness, which is confined to the private, reproductive and bodily world of family life. Hers is the ‘nether world’ of the particular, while man’s public life, through his higher form of consciousness, ‘becomes existence and activity’ (#460) - in other words, is transcendent. The public and the private worlds are dependent each upon the other, the family dependent on the man for his organisation of the world, and thus for its livelihood, and the man dependent on the family not only for reproduction, for, as Lloyd says, ‘its existence allows men to flourish as fully self-conscious ethical beings without sacrificing natural feeling’ (1984:84). While woman looks after the bodily and emotional needs of the family and the social need for reproduction, man, without sacrifice, is free to indulge in higher activity. ‘The prerogative of thus having it both ways is ... a male one’ (Lloyd, 1984:84-5). However, while I agree that this is the case in this symbolic schema, I will be arguing that in reality, and in Beauvoir’s philosophy, man does ‘sacrifice’ natural feeling, or affect, and indeed the possibility of a fully ethical relation with others, to this ‘higher’ ideal.

Beauvoir is agreeing that woman is indeed created as Hegel describes, and suggesting that this is what must be changed. She has a variation upon Hegel’s story, and it is this that enables her to judge woman. As Lloyd points out, for Beauvoir and Sartre it is through the ‘look’ that woman is subjected (1984:96). In this existentialist elaboration of Hegel, I can either submit to or resist the look.
that initially constitutes me in the Other’s eyes only. In other words, I can allow myself to be ‘frozen’ by the look of the Other, choosing to construct myself as that being which the Other sees me to be - and this is what woman does. It is here, according to Beauvoir, that reciprocity does not exist. ‘Woman sees herself ... as man defines her’ (SS:168). Two of the ways he defines her are particularly important to my argument. He sees her as an object who properly serves his own needs and interests, as his complement, and also as bound to natural bodily processes, to a natural being, an inferior passive being as opposed to himself, the superior actor upon the world. Woman, says Beauvoir, is morally at fault in accepting this external judgement, allowing her freedom and autonomy to be constrained and her self subjected. Man, on the other hand, insofar as he sees himself as the One, acts in good faith in refusing to be determined by external given conditions, including being defined by the Other. Assuming the position of essential subject, he engages in freely chosen projects, so transcending himself and nature. Through her choice, her failure to claim reciprocity, woman becomes an ambiguous being, a subject which is yet an object; her aim is to please by making herself object. ‘[S]he stands before man not as a subject but as an object paradoxically endued with subjectivity; she takes herself simultaneously as self and as other...’ (SS:727):

In her eyes man incarnates the Other, as she does for the man; but this Other seems to her to be on the plane of the essential, and with reference to him she sees herself as the inessential. She will free herself from the paternal home, from her mother’s hold, she will open up her future, not by active conquest but by delivering herself up, passive and docile, into the hands of a new master (SS:352).

Why is woman so submissive in accepting ‘this alien point of view’, asks Beauvoir (SS:18). Her answer is generally taken to lie in her statement: ‘One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman’ (SS:295). As Judith Butler points out, this apparently simple statement, that woman is a social rather than a natural construction, is not unproblematic (1990:8). In fact, Beauvoir is not suggesting that woman is simply the passive victim of oppression, or of the form of ‘civilization’ within which she is produced, but that she actively chooses her own becoming. In other words, woman is not forced to take the ‘easy road’ offered her by man in bad faith, leading to the ‘absolute evil’ of immanence, stagnation and the degradation of her existence. Unwilling to exert herself, she actively chooses

5. Strictly speaking, 'nature' is not the term that conforms with Sartre's existentialism, which argues that 'nature' does not exist for humans as a given or untouched external force because they are compelled to act upon it as it impinges upon them, to make choices about it, and to give it meaning. Thus there is no 'natural' nature for Sartre, who speaks of the world prior to man's organisation of it of an 'undifferentiated plenitude of being'. Consistent with this, Beauvoir's use of the term 'immanence' generally refers to a 'lazy' and contemptible acceptance of given conditions, which could mean either 'nature' in its common meaning, or the nature that has been given meaning and has been fashioned through human choices, beliefs and practices.
it out of laziness - in preference to the harder path of ‘freely chosen projects’ which alone can justify, or make ethical, her existence. This means that Beauvoir has a prior assumption that a type of human nature exists prior to self-becoming, for unless woman has a certain quality, say an essential desire for self-assertion, how is she to know that she should make the ‘right’ choice and resist man’s evaluation of her?

Apart from the general objection to ‘blaming the victim’, there is another sense in which Beauvoir’s statement is problematic, for if taken to mean that it is the world that constructs woman, this is in conflict with her emphatic attribution of self-responsibility to woman. The result is a number of ambiguities as she tries to explain how woman has come into being. This is a severe problem, but Beauvoir deserves credit for wresting with it, and I agree with her that women do need to become more autonomous and less other-dependent in defining themselves. It is what this means in theoretical and practical terms that is in question. As Beauvoir admits, man is not really as independent of woman in his self-construction as Hegel indicates. Man needs woman as woman. This makes problematic the simple substitution of a person of the female sex into the primal confrontation between the two would-be subjects, yet this is what Beauvoir suggests is the solution to woman’s dilemma.

**Beauvoir’s Ambivalences**

I will now leave Hegel’s symbolic schema to consider the specific influences that Beauvoir says come to shape woman in the world, and cause her to succumb to the masculine gaze. The ambivalences apparent in *The Second Sex* all centre around the notion of causes: Who is ‘to blame’, or to what can woman’s inferior condition be attributed? In this context, three problematic issues can be distinguished. Firstly, is woman compelled or does she choose her position in the world? Or is it possible to do both, as Beauvoir sometimes seems to be suggesting? Secondly, what is the role of Beauvoir’s ‘inferior’, ‘weak’ and ‘passive’ female body? Is it, or is it not, instrumental in woman’s ‘downfall’? And, thirdly, what part is played by the ‘androcentrism’ of the world, something that Beauvoir frequently notes and yet seems to pass over. If, as Beauvoir recognises, both men and women see and shape the world from a perspective that gives priority to male needs and values, why does she not counter this by taking a more woman-centred stance herself?

Thus the three issues are concerned with self-determination or freedom, the body, and the question of sexed perspective or identity.
Forced or free?

Beauvoir’s statement that woman is not born but becomes woman might be taken to indicate that the female human being has no natural weakness that forces her into immanence. It does not tell us whether the feminine woman has been forced by some other exterior power to adopt her inferior, subservient role, or whether she has actively chosen it.

On the one hand, Beauvoir says that woman remains sovereign over herself, capable of making responsible choices and thus of making herself as the person she wishes to be, with her actions and desires under her own control. On the other hand, she says that woman is offered a painful choice between two destinies, neither of which can satisfy her disparate desires. Here, woman seems to be the victim of desires that are instilled in her in circumstances that are outside of her control. If this is the case, should we agree with Beauvoir that a ‘wrong’ choice can be made? Should we agree with her that real choice can exist in such circumstances? Why does she apparently deny the moral validity of the affective aspect of human being in making choices? In other words, Beauvoir seems to say that, morally, our desires must not be influential in making our choices. Although she does not tell us how, she seems to believe that we can simply rise above them. This conflicts with the view common today that self and desire are closely integrated, and that although desire may sometimes be controlled, it is not to be so readily dismissed. This question of autonomy and desire is also taken up by Foucault; I will therefore be returning to it, in chapters three and four.

Femininity, for Beauvoir, is an inferior condition. The feminine woman remains shut up in immanence, in the ‘en-soi’, ‘the brutish life of subjection to given conditions’ (SS:29). The male child, because of the way he is treated, she says, is able more easily to transcend this ‘degraded’ and ‘stagnant’ state, to find freedom from the given through continual striving, and to expand his existence ‘into an indefinitely open future’ (SS:29). Because he is encouraged and trained to be active and assertive in order to become a man, and because activity and assertion are what is involved in becoming a transcendent subject, there is no contradiction for him between what is required of him by others and his ‘human urge’ to become a fully free autonomous subject:

The advantage man enjoys, which makes itself felt from his childhood, is that his vocation as a human being in no way runs counter to his destiny as a male ... He is not divided. Whereas it is required of woman that in order to realise her femininity she must make herself object and prey, which is to say she must renounce her claims as sovereign subject (SS:691)

The young girl is taught to behave as a passive and pleasing object, in training for her destiny as a woman: ‘Any self-assertion will diminish her
femininity and her attractiveness’ (SS:359). The girl feels the same human urge towards subjectivity as the boy. Like him, she strives to assert herself and to demand reciprocity in her dealings with the other, but, unlike him, she is strongly discouraged. At the time of adolescence, when her erotic urges become strong and she wishes to enter the adult world of sexuality, she is forced to make a choice between subjectivity and femininity - between her continuing urge to be a free and active subject and her erotic, socially imposed, urge towards pleasing passivity. She ‘is touching because she makes a stand, alone and weak, against the world. But the world is too strong; if she persists in her opposition, it breaks her’ (SS:387). Finally, she submits: men ‘compel her to assume the status of the Other’ (SS:29). This seemingly natural behaviour is in reality a ‘resignation [which] has its source in the adolescent girl’s past, in the society around her, and particularly in the future assigned to her’ (SS:352). ‘[Immanence and inferiority] were imposed upon her’ (SS:726).

This seems to show clearly enough that woman’s fate is not in her own hands and that any question of consent or complicity is hardly relevant. But, in apparent self-contradiction, Beauvoir is emphatic that today’s woman actually chooses to give up her freedom and she is critical of woman’s complicity and moral fault in accepting her fate. Beauvoir distinguishes sharply between the coerced adolescent girl-child, the constrained women of the past, and the adult woman of today who, she says, does have the freedom to choose her own being, despite the difficulties set in her way.

Toril Moi disagrees with this view, saying that Beauvoir ‘argues that women cannot automatically be accused of being in bad faith when they fail to behave as authentically free beings’ (1994:151). It is true, as Moi says, that in The Ethics of Ambiguity Beauvoir does exclude negro slaves of the eighteenth century and ‘Mohammedan women enclosed in a harem’ from being guilty of bad faith (Beauvoir 1948[EA]:38). However, Moi uses this to substantiate her claim that in The Second Sex Beauvoir also includes Western women of the mid-twentieth century as being in a ‘situation [that] prevents them from realising their original freedom in the world’ (Moi 1994:279, n.5). The fact is that in the very same paragraph Beauvoir specifically rejects this, saying that ‘... the western woman of today ... chooses [her situation] or at least consents to it’ and, furthermore, bitterly accuses today’s women of ‘deep complicity with the world of men’ (EA:38), an accusation that she repeats in The Second Sex. When she says: ‘This downfall represents a moral fault if the subject consents to it’ (SS:29), she means that woman does consent:

Man wants woman to be object: she makes herself object; at the very moment when she does that, she is exercising a free activity. Therein is her original treason; the most docile, the most passive, is still a conscious being (SS:626; emphasis added).
On the question of complicity, she says: ‘It must be admitted that males find in woman more complicity than the oppressor usually finds in the oppressed.... She cheerfully believes these lies because they invite her to follow the easy slope ...’ (SS:730). Upper class women, especially, ‘are eager accomplices of their masters ...’ (SS:638) and dependent women ‘live as parasites’, demoralising those women who would be self-sufficient (SS:707). Finally, she acidly observes, ‘... no doubt it is more comfortable to submit to a blind enslavement than to work for liberation: the dead, for that matter, are better adapted to the earth than are the living’ (SS:292).

In choosing to become woman, the female mutilates herself, says Beauvoir:

... she is a human being before becoming a woman, and she knows already that to accept herself as a woman is to become resigned and to mutilate herself; if the resignation is tempting, the mutilation is hateful (SS:321).

For Beauvoir the polarised question of free will versus cultural determinism is already answered in the philosophy she adopts, in which free will, or choice, always already exists for human beings. Only I can choose to give up my freedom - it cannot be taken from me. The possibility of choice, for Beauvoir, is intrinsic to consciousness and cannot be alienated by external factors. Even if I give up my freedom and become passive woman, this has been my choice and in any case is not an irrevocable step. The next choice still remains mine to make. But the ambivalence is not so easily removed. On the one hand, for Beauvoir, there is no question of cultural determinism. While she does consider that there can be strong cultural influence, this occurs at a more superficial level. On the other hand, Beauvoir steps away from her philosophical base in allowing that the Negro slaves and women of earlier times did not have freedom of choice.

Man is indeed in bad faith in tempting and coercing woman to remain in the position of passive object in order that his own subjectivity in relation to her may be confirmed without the struggle that would occur if the relation were reciprocal (see SS:171-3). But woman’s action in succumbing to the temptation is crucial, both because she can effect change herself without waiting for the unlikely event of man’s goodwill (SS:738) and because, in Beauvoir’s eyes, woman is a contemptible and abject creature compared to man, who, despite his use of woman, leads a far more active and transcendent life than she does. Woman is free to choose not to succumb to man’s coercion. Her bad faith consists in her

6. Mary Dietz has pointed out that Parshley caused problems by translating 'la realite humaine' as 'human nature' rather than as 'human reality' (1992:76). However, I argue that Beauvoir clearly does presume certain pre-social human characteristics that are no different in effect from human nature, as shown, for example, by the above quotation.

7. Sartre is adamant that even the slave in chains is free (BN:703). This is consistent with his conception of consciousness which will be discussed in greater detail in chapter two.
disavowal of this - in treating herself as though she is unable to make any other choice - and so Beauvoir presents it as both more reprehensible and more fundamental.

As I said earlier, for Beauvoir there cannot be cultural determinism, but, rather, cultural influence. However, a valid response is that this difference is specious, since it does not explain how it can be that such a hugely disproportionate number of female persons, although born with exactly the same human urge to be free and active subjects pursuing their own ends, have succumbed to exterior forces to actually choose unfreedom, becoming mere providers of means towards others’ ends. However, as already noted, Beauvoir’s answer is that female persons are subjected to much more pressure than males. Nevertheless, it is not unreasonable to suspect a flaw in a theory which places blame on women when almost all have ‘succumbed’ and to suggest that in this case ‘influence’ seems to have become, de facto, ‘determinism’ and, so, to have negated the concept of freedom at the heart of Beauvoir’s thought.

It has become clear in this section that problems in *The Second Sex* cluster around the question of what a human being is, and how subjectivity is created. This will be explored further in chapter two in order firstly to understand Beauvoir’s philosophy fully and then to look for a way of correcting the problems that have arisen.

**The Body**

Continuing my discussion of Beauvoir’s difficulties with existentialist philosophy, I now want to suggest that, as well as being ambivalent concerning woman’s freedom, she is also ambivalent concerning the role of the female body in positioning women in the world. As I noted earlier, Beauvoir’s statement that woman is not born but becomes woman might be taken to indicate that the female human being has no natural weakness that forces her into immanence. But, in fact, Beauvoir does see serious disadvantages in the female body.

According to her, these are: (1) its reproductive function; (2) its comparative physical weakness; (3) its frequent menstrual crises and incapacities; and (4) its sexual passivity. In *The Second Sex*, these particularities of the female body both make it more difficult for the female to achieve transcendence and were the original cause of woman’s downfall. In this section I will examine Beauvoir’s inconsistency in maintaining this, while also maintaining that the facts of the body have no significance in themselves.

The cause of woman’s original imprisonment in ‘repetition and immanence’ - the ‘key to the whole mystery’ - was her reproductive capacity, which not only
made her partially dependent upon men for protection and food, but forced her into a life of service to the species (SS:96). As with the question of woman’s free choice, we find that there is a discrepancy between woman’s freedom and what is imposed upon her - in this case by nature:

instead of integrating the powerful drives of the species into her individual life, the female is the prey of the species, the interests of which are dissociated from the female’s interests as an individual (SS:393). 8

Giving birth and suckling, which until recently have occupied a large part of woman’s existence, are natural biological functions which, Beauvoir says, are not creative. Neither is domestic labour, which is mere ‘repetitive drudgery’, producing ‘nothing new’. Thus woman’s work merely perpetuates life rather than serving ‘more important’ ends, while man’s activity, hunting, building, conquering, is transcendent, involving a growing mastery over natural objects and affirming man in his human existence (conscious control as against natural or animal being). The masculine proclivity for risking death, for example, is seen as transcendent because this is man’s chosen action upon his natural condition, whereas giving birth and suckling are an immanent part of the natural condition. 9

In the same vein, the female’s lack of strength relative to the male is, according to Beauvoir, a natural disadvantage, which can cause women more easily to perceive themselves as passive and weak, and hence incline them to adopt passive and weak behaviours. Speaking of a young girl who learned through ‘one or two unpleasant experiences’ that ‘brute force is on the side of the males’, she says:

Not to have confidence in one’s body is to lose confidence in oneself. One needs only to see the pride young men take in their muscles to understand that every subject regards his body as his objective expression (SS:355).

Thus, woman’s ‘muscular weakness disposes her to passivity’ (SS:721), not only in itself, but also because it allows the possibility of violence to ‘haunt’ her world (SS:354).

8. Notice how Beauvoir opposes the interests of the species to those of the individual. I return to this in chapter two.
9. At this point, we might want to question the values of a philosophy which places such high value on risking death, an action that very frequently involves risking lives other than one's own, such as in wars, and such low value on giving birth to another human being. Such values are centred upon individual effects rather than upon relational ones. They disguise an androcentric bias: risking death is good, and only incidentally, this is what men do; giving birth is bad, and only incidentally, this is what women do.
To be added to these weaknesses are the problems of menstruation, which is not only ‘painful’ but:

[its] headaches, over-fatigue, abdominal pains, make normal activities distressing or impossible; psychic difficulties often appear; nervous and irritable, a woman may be temporarily in a state of semi-lunacy; the control of the nerve centres over the peripheral and sympathetic systems is no longer assured; circulatory difficulties and certain auto-intoxications make the body a screen interposed between the woman and the world (SS:353).

Thus it seems that woman’s body lets her down, making it more difficult for her to act powerfully and to impose her will upon the world. While it is true that, certainly in some instances, Beauvoir is merely describing how woman feels about her body in her immanent state, the evidence I am offering clearly shows that Beauvoir herself finds the female body to be inferior to the male in a way that impedes transcendence.10

We find with sexuality, too, that man is not faced with the same discrepancy between his body and his masculine existence that woman must face between her body and the possibility of human activity (as against feminine passivity): ‘The role of the initiator belongs to the young man anatomically and conventionally’ (SS:401), and: ‘As a matter of fact, the privileged position of man comes from the integration of his biologically aggressive role with his social function as leader or master’ (SS:397). Female sexuality, on the other hand, is naturally passive: ‘Still, it is true that the sexual role of woman is largely passive’ (SS:419). It ‘is even possible to copulate with a [female] corpse’ (SS:395). What is more, ‘[woman’s] anatomy compels her to remain clumsy and impotent like a eunuch: the wish for possession is fruitless for want of an organ in which it is incarnated’ (SS:398-9). For Beauvoir, the female sexual organs cannot compete with the erect male organ’s ‘imperious expression of a subjectivity’ (SS:402), a curious statement in view of the common experience of men that they cannot consciously control erection, which is, therefore, according to existentialist belief, a manifestation of immanence to be despised. Furthermore, it is clear that Beauvoir is adopting masculine criteria in assuming, for example, that possession means penetration, or that the erect male organ appears ‘imperious’ rather than, say, comical.11

10. Beauvoir often insists that it is not the female body that causes the problem, but the meanings that are constructed from the social situation. The body of the frigid wife, for example, has been created from the particularities of her situation, not from her anatomy or biology, or from some other intrinsic female inferiority. Here, Beauvoir posits the body as neutral, something that takes on its character from the meanings we give it, but on the other hand, she claims that the female body has determined woman's fate, historically. The reason behind her ambivalence is discussed in chapter two.

11. It may be argued that, consistent with Sartrean phenomenology in which things are to be considered as they appear to consciousness, Beauvoir is expressing the meanings that people
Thus, while man remodels nature, the form of the female body means that woman more readily remains inactive or in a state of immanence. However, Beauvoir is at pains to point out that, although females do have a natural disadvantage, the real problem lies in their situation in the world. She claims that physical weakness would be 'easily compensated for' if girls were permitted to assert themselves vigorously, through their bodies (SS:357). It is the assertion of 'spirit and will' that brings transcendence, and the real problem is that girls are strongly discouraged from such self-assertion. Similarly, if in times past women were overburdened by pregnancy and the subsequent care of infants, modern invention enables them to actively choose motherhood rather than being immanently subsumed by it. Today, finally, woman is able to join man, who, all along, has been able to attain an 'authentically moral attitude' through renouncing 'mere being to assume his position as an existent' (SS:172).

Nevertheless, Beauvoir points out that 'there will always be certain differences between man and woman .... her relations to her own body, to that of the male, to the child, will never be identical with those the male bears to his own body, to that of the female, and to the child...' (SS:740). But she does not take up the interesting questions of difference and equality this raises, merely saying: '[Even though] she is more enslaved to the species than is the male, [and] her animality is more manifest ... she belongs to the human realm' (SS:285). '[T]he young girl who opens up for herself the avenues of transcendence ... will not regard her sexual specialisation as a mutilation, and she will easily rise above it' (SS:341, emphasis added). Again, we might suspect androcentrism in a view that posits the male body as unproblematic and the female body as highly problematic. Many women have felt disquiet at the intensity and fervour with which Beauvoir describes the abhorrent qualities of the female body. Again, there is ambiguity: Does she, or does she not, herself denigrate the female body?

In Beauvoir’s attitude to the female body we can see the repetition of Hegel’s dualist valuation of the public and the private, discussed above, in which woman inhabits the ‘nether world’ of the family, while man actively occupies the higher, transcendent, public sphere.12 In addition we can note the influence of Kant, who set up a moral opposition between the rational and the given, or natural, believing that only those actions decided upon through conscious rational thought could be

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attribute to male and female sexual organs, rather than what she herself believes to be the case. However, the body is a facticity, a particular form that constrains us in our transcendence. For Beauvoir, woman is very definitely an inferior creature, but she is able to change this. On the other hand, her body is a handicap, which can only be surmounted, and Beauvoir does not suggest more positive alternative images for that body. The argument is decided conclusively by Sartre's discussion of 'holes and slime' in Being and Nothingness (see chapter two). 12. Significantly, Rosalyn Diprose shows that in Hegel's 'master-slave' relationship, self-consciousness is able to face an Other who is equal and the same only through eliminating the other's body, which is the sign of contingency and difference (1994:44-7).
truly moral, because to employ the ‘animal’ passions for this purpose was to remain outside of the only realm where he considered morality to be possible - that of the human will exercising choice and control. Kant wanted moral options tested according to their universalisability, a characteristic that he considered inapplicable to the passions, which are of an individual nature and which, he believed, cannot be willed into or out of existence.\[13\]

So, for Beauvoir, immanence is linked not to the body, but to a particular body, that body which is fashioned and controlled by ‘alien’ forces (‘nature’ or the passions) and not by activity rationally decided upon by the individual. Because they cannot be willed, bodily functions such as procreation are ‘brutish’ and ‘low’ - part of the realm of the animal - and constitute a fixed destiny and a lack of conscious decision. Opposed to this body is the body as constituted in the ‘higher’ realm of transcendence where conscious activity and invention allows control over nature and passion. For Beauvoir, as for Kant, morality is possible only in conditions of conscious rational control over what is external to consciousness rather than being subject to it. To leave the body to the exigencies of nature, for example, is to act in bad faith. The natural body is not a moral body because it has not been subjected to rational human choice - that is, except in the negative sense, since Beauvoir would say that inaction remains a choice.

While Beauvoir wants to relegate past women, but not men, to a given, and thus not human, existence, today’s woman, she claims, can be fully human. Through the invention of contraception, she no longer has to endure unwanted pregnancy but can actively choose it, making it into a project, and therefore a transcendent act rather than a mere immanent facticity. This argument fails to explain why woman, an essentially free being, was compelled in the past to undergo vaginal, heterosexual intercourse which resulted in her further subjection, when, according to Beauvoir, she has always had the imagination to conceive of other means of satisfying her ‘animal urges’, as well as the ability to deny them. Further, Beauvoir simply takes it for granted that women had no alternative but to nurture those infants that were born. In fact, we know that many women have found various means of dispossessing themselves of such unwanted or impossible burdens. So, Beauvoir contradicts her own statement that ‘... in her as in him the given traits are taken on through the fact of existence, she belongs also to the human realm. To assimilate her to nature is simply to act from prejudice’ (SS:285).

Beauvoir remains unable to resolve the problem involved in her view of human being as ‘the strange ambiguity of existence made body’ (SS:737). There is an implication in her thought that the really transcendent woman is unlikely to have babies at all, for, even when entered into as a project, pregnancy and

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13. Again, it is to be noted that this is a morality that disavows difference.
motherhood still contain too much that is immanent. For example, she says, ‘... gestation appears as creative; but that is a strange kind of creation which is accomplished in a contingent and passive manner’ (SS:513; see also 178, 521).

The cause of these rifts in Beauvoir’s argument, I argue, is that her philosophy necessarily sees woman’s body as a problem that needs ‘fixing’. This is an impossible dilemma for Beauvoir, for, as I will show, the denigration of the female body is based upon such a fundamental aspect of her philosophy that it cannot be avoided, even though it is absolutely necessary that she do so.

Whereas the female body makes it more difficult, and historically virtually impossible, for women to achieve transcendence, the male body does not have this disadvantage, or at least only to a very small extent. True, a particular man may become obsessed with ‘the flesh’, and in so doing limit his own freedom, but this is not an ‘inevitable’ part of his existence, as are giving birth and suckling infants for women, and, normally, it does not constitute the central aspect of his life. Male sexual needs are, according to Beauvoir, simply and quickly met: with his organ ‘as simple and neat as a finger’ (SS:406), ‘the male rids himself of certain discomforting secretions; he obtains complete relief, ... which is unfailingly accompanied with pleasure’ (SS:393).

Despite Beauvoir’s and Sartre’s efforts to conceptualise humans as fully embodied, Beauvoir tacitly admits man’s disavowal of his embodied state and approves of it. For her, this disavowal takes a particular form. It is not that man does not view the world from within the particularity of his body. And it is not that he does not, for example, take pleasure in or gain benefit from his body, its sexual or muscular prowess, or feel its disadvantages, such as ugliness or disability. It is, rather, that whatever its condition, his body is not a burden to him as is woman’s. In Beauvoir’s thought, he is not so much disembodied as disencumbered of his body through the definition of it as unproblematic. In other words, the phrase ‘as simple and neat as a finger’ has great symbolic significance; his body is ‘light’ or uncomplicated. It is seen as demanding little time or effort to satisfy, and thus as causing little hindrance to the important transcending activity of rational control over brute life. By contrast, woman’s body is seen to be a heavy burden which ‘has a life of its own’, standing in the way of her freedom to make her own life’s activity. Man’s body, despite the shaming ‘unjustified immanence’ and ‘absurd contingence’ of all flesh, unlike woman’s, does not stand in the way of his transcendence because it is seen as more easily controllable by consciousness and more in control of others than woman’s (SS:402; see also Lloyd 1984:99-102).

14. Woman's pleasure, by comparison, is notoriously uncertain and unlocatable (SS:393-4).
The important point is that both conceptually and in reality the way that man frees himself from the body is by casting woman as body. In a conceptual mind/body dualism, he assumes mind for himself, claiming that he has transcended ‘mere bodily immanence’. In doing this, he also materially disencumbers himself of problematic or burdensome aspects of the body, and he does this largely by placing the burden upon women. Of course, men’s bodies are not so much factually unproblematic as defined and perceived to be so. It is not that Beauvoir fails to recognise these things. She does. But her answer is for woman to follow man in disencumbering herself, and this simply moves the problem, rather than dissolving it.

I have argued that Beauvoir assigns to woman’s body a natural tendency towards immanence, and to man’s a natural transcendence. Just as in Hegel’s consciousness-other formulation, man-subject is dependent upon woman-object, so does man achieve his ‘superior’ bodily position only through a dependency upon an inferior, ‘earth-bound’ Other. In other words, the identity of ‘man’ the transcendent could not exist if the opposite identity, ‘woman’, in all of her inferiority, her contingent flesh, did not.

Beauvoir does note man’s bad faith in his interaction with woman but she does not acknowledge the full implications of this admission for woman’s body. It is only in avoiding reproduction and associated tasks, she implies, that woman can achieve transcendence. As Moira Gatens points out, man does not have this problem in the first place, because ‘the male body and masculinity are covertly taken to be the norm’ (1991:57). Clearly, the problem exists because of the positive value given to consciously controlled activity and the corresponding negative value given to uncontrolled ‘nature’, and in particular to the uncontrollable aspects of the body, a burden allocated to the female. Man’s body, having thus been made so unproblematic, is accommodated without difficulty within a philosophy that claims to explain human being as fully embodied and in the world, as Sartre’s does. For him, woman’s body is another question indeed, as I will show in chapter two.

In this discussion I have tried to illustrate Beauvoir’s inconsistencies concerning the body and to show the reverberations of a consciousness/’nature’

15. I must re-emphasise here that in confining myself to the question of gender relations I do not imply that other bodies are not also allotted a similar burden.
16. The weaknesses of the masculine body might, for example, include 'hormonally induced' fits of violent rage and early death from various male-specific disorders.
17. Judith Butler concludes that for Simone Beauvoir, the masculine project of disembodiment is self-deluding and, finally, unsatisfactory (1986:43. See also Butler 1990:11). However, this conclusion is only implied by the ambiguities of The Second Sex, where open recognition of it would result in the collapse of Beauvoir's entire thesis, which depends crucially upon such dichotomy, as I will argue further in chapter two.
dualism in her work. I have begun to discuss the effects of this dualism on the construction of man. This will be continued in chapter two where I will be looking more deeply into the concepts that underlie Beauvoir’s treatment of the body and drawing out their consequences for human inter-relationship.

**Androcentrism**

In this section, I want to illustrate what I am calling Beauvoir’s androcentrism, and to discuss it in a preliminary way. This male-centred view is, of course, closely related to phallogocentrism, which I discuss briefly in chapter two, in a section on Sartre’s attitude towards woman’s body.

As shown in the following quotations, Beauvoir shows that she recognises that the world within which women make themselves is constructed upon the basis of masculine values and viewpoints. For example:

... the categories in which men think of the world are established *from their point of view, as absolute*: they misconceive reciprocity, here as everywhere (SS:286).

The sphere to which she belongs is everywhere enclosed, limited, dominated, by the male universe (SS:324-5).

It is puzzling that, despite such statements, Beauvoir herself judges woman from the masculine viewpoint, when read from today’s feminist perspective, and that she remains ultimately within the masculine value system. She seems to be asking women to embrace and internalise the very androcentric values that she recognises as such.

From our own point in time, we are also surprised that Beauvoir describes women and women’s work in such a negative fashion. For example, she judges the work of female writers, Austen, the Brontes and Eliot, by masculine standards - ‘ease’, ‘calm sincerity’, ‘richness of experience’, ‘sweep’ (SS:718). With such criteria, it is not surprising that she finds the male writers, Stendhal, Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy, superior. Had she taken the best qualities of the women authors as her standard of judgement, she may well have found the men wanting.

Today we are perhaps also less likely to agree with Beauvoir that cakes and flowers, like virtually all productions of the private realm, are ‘useless’. And we

18. For a different analysis of Beauvoir’s antinomies between the body and the social, see Toril Moi (1992). Moi discusses the psychological advantage for boys of the possession of a penis in *The Second Sex*, finding, as I do, that ‘Beauvoir’s discourse becomes curiously slippery’ (1992:110). However, Moi does not explain this ‘slipperiness’.
can recognise the gender of the malicious voice she uses when she tells us that ‘three-quarters of the men pursued by over-erotic women are doctors .... especially old maids who come to the doctor for very trifling reasons and ask for ‘a very thorough examination’, or go from one gynaecologist to another in quest of ‘massage’ or ‘treatment’ (SS:560-1). These and numerous other statements, such as ‘masculine accomplishment is far superior to that of women’ (SS:638), betray in Beauvoir a deeply held and unquestioned set of androcentric (as well as bourgeois, professional, and intellectual) values. Beauvoir denigrates women and admires men. Only the young girl, in her ‘touching plight’, is treated with sympathy.

If, as she recognises, both men and women give almost absolute precedence to male needs and values, why does she treat this as relatively unimportant? If woman is to pose herself as essential, surely this will involve setting up her own needs and values as also essential? Why does Beauvoir not begin this process by taking a more woman-centred stance, or at least by suggesting that other values may be more suited to woman’s particular needs? In this section I offer my explanation for what seems to be either blindness and confusion at best or hypocrisy and self-deception at worst.

In Beauvoir’s eyes, man’s achievements and values are valid because they are derived from, and oriented toward, transcendent activity. Woman’s output and values are scorned because they are seen to be derived from woman’s status as object, from her ‘desire to please’, and from her ‘laziness’. Woman must set herself up as essential, transforming her possibilities and values in the process, and Beauvoir sees no need to deny the superiority of man’s example.

Beauvoir wants women to become, if not absolutely the same as men, at least the same in all important respects. Woman, she concludes, should accept the masculine attitude towards the world; she must declare herself man’s equal, transcend the particularities of her body and ‘pride herself on thinking, taking action, working, creating, on the same terms as men ...’ (SS:727), thus achieving her own self-transcendence. In pursuing this normative theory, Beauvoir wants to claim that, whatever may have been the case in originary history or even in the recent past, modern science and technology have now made biological differences irrelevant. However, biological differences only become irrelevant here if they are ‘neutralised’ or rendered invisible in terms of what is ‘really important’ - of masculine values in a world where the given is transcended.

19. Beauvoir does say that ‘there will always be certain differences between man and woman’, based, not directly upon the body, but upon the special form of female eroticism, which makes for a different relation of the female to her own body and to others' bodies (SS:740). But this is more in the form of a belated reassurance to the nostalgic than a statement supported by her philosophy.
Toril Moi strongly disagrees with this view, saying that Beauvoir does not want ‘women to become like men .... Beauvoir does not expect women to take on any particular identity at all, she simply wants them to be free’ (1994:143-4). I disagree: Beauvoir not only wants us to be free but tells us exactly how this is to be achieved. As I have shown, it is a question of identity and of values, both of which are created through opposing the feminine. Moi attempts to demolish critics of The Second Sex by laying a smokescreen of essentialism: ‘Unlike many present-day feminists ... [Beauvoir] sees identity as a consequence and not a cause of freedom. For her, women do not have a secret, long-oppressed identity which must be liberated if the struggle for freedom is to be won’ (1994:144). Moi’s target here is not, as might be thought, essentialists who see the feminine as pre-given but feminists of difference, whom she persists in misconstruing as crudely essentialist. There is, for them, no question of an essential ‘long oppressed identity’ for women; rather, the argument is concerned with the creation of identity, the violence of assimilation into the Same and the ethics of difference - of the relation to the other. When Moi says that it must be accepted that ‘the fundamental axiom of The Second Sex is that consciousness is free, not that it ought to be sexually differentiated or defined’ she is again being ingenuous (1994:184). As I will show in chapter two, the problem is that ‘neutral’ free consciousness (which is actually masculine).

The reason for Beauvoir’s extraordinary ambivalence is that the feminine cannot be embraced as such within the masculine in her thought, for as immanence it is conceptually opposed to the masculine transcendence. While it is up to woman to refuse to see herself as man sees her, it is impossible for her, object by definition, to assume the subject position as woman. In Beauvoir’s thought, the only possibility of emancipation for woman is for her to adopt the masculine style of conscious, transcendent, action over the given, disavowing her body, and abandoning her feminine identity and values. Yet it is already possible to glimpse that problems will emerge in this attempted conversion of woman.

A Note on Dualism

Since it has become apparent that Beauvoir’s thought depends upon dualist categories, an issue I will be taking up in more depth in chapter two, and since I will be showing later how Foucault’s philosophy benefits by their avoidance, allowing space for the recognition of difference, it is appropriate to digress briefly at this point in order to discuss dualism. Dualism has been an object of considerable feminist criticism, perhaps to the extent that there is now a tendency to take it for granted as without need for further examination. For some, it appears to be an inevitability which has ‘always’ existed ‘everywhere’ and which is virtually impossible to escape.
The type of dualism I am discussing is of the A/Not-A type (Jay 1991). This is the form of thought that allows the division of the world into us and them, the Same and the Other, and the good/bad valuation that accompanies this. As will become more apparent in chapter two, when I examine the foundations of Beauvoir’s thought, a striking feature of dualism in philosophy is its ability to reverberate, to repeat itself endlessly once the foundational dichotomy has been laid down. This enmeshing effect does make dualist thought seem inescapable, but the trick is to avoid the initial dichotomy. It is only then that the space can exist for multiple difference to be sanctioned. As Nancy Jay says, in the A/Not-A dualist logic, no third term is possible - everything must be A or Not-A (1991:95). Dualist thought is antagonistic to difference, and so, I argue, is not appropriate to an ethical feminism.

Historical and cultural evidence shows that this type of gender dichotomy is not ubiquitous, encouraging optimism that it is not inescapable. Nancy Jay says that although the male/female dichotomy need not take the A/Not-A form, it invariably does (1991:94). However, more recent feminist research brings this into doubt. For example, Caroline Bynum shows how, in the late medieval period, the body of Christ was sometimes seen as female (Bynum 1991). The fact that Christ’s body was depicted with nurturant breasts, for example, does not show that there was no male/female distinction at that time, but it does seem to indicate that the ‘law of the excluded middle’ was not always in place. Since, as Jay says, this rigid either/or differentiation is intrinsic to the A/Not-A logic (1991:92-3), its absence suggests at least that different forms of gender distinction have existed in the past.20

Neither do I believe that we can take it for granted that the A/Not-A form of dichotomy is ubiquitous today. For example, it seems that some non-Western cultures do not employ this same mode of thought concerning gender. As Jay shows in her example of Durkheim, it has been common practice for Western anthropologists to impose their own logic upon these others, rather than to investigate the actual logic involved. Henrietta Moore (1988) discusses the unreflective application of Western categories in anthropological thought, and provides several examples of feminist anthropological studies that throw strong doubt upon the notion that gender relations can be described universally through the A/Not-A model. For example, in some Papua New Guinean cultures, female pollution (so-called), far from being a source of shame for women, as Western dualist categories might lead us to expect, is actually a manifestation of female power, from which men must protect themselves (even though the women are in other ways indisputably dominated by the men). In other words, this female power whose name we have so poorly translated, is a problem for men, while

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20. In *The Order of Things*, Foucault also shows that things have not always been opposed, or ordered, in the way that is so familiar today.
women feel little or no responsibility or abashment concerning it. It is not considered to be a sign of women’s vileness or other inferior character (Moore 1988:16-21). The point about this is that, although the women have this dangerous power, it is far from being categorised as belonging to a chain of negative, evil, or Not-A, attributes, as we would assume from our own cultural perspective.

These examples show that we cannot take for granted the congruity of past or non-Western modes of thought with our own, but I think they also show that we need to be wary of the assumption that this dominant pattern of thought is entirely pervasive of modern Western cultures. If we were to examine binarisms in various cultural subgroups, we may find that they do not always follow the A/Not-A pattern. This, too, would make the possibility of change more promising.

It also seems that we need to be wary of over-simplification in our understanding of the operations of gender binarisms. An example of this is the common assumption that Kant pits nature against culture, when, in fact, he recognises that humans in their striving for perfection, or ‘culture’, are part of nature. While it remains true that Kant does pit this ‘cultured nature’ against ‘brute nature’, to suggest that he places woman unequivocally in the latter series is to gloss over a great deal of evidence that is counter to this view, as I will explain in chapter two. While it is not relevant to analyse Kant’s use of dualism here, one thing to be noted is that dualisms are, like Beauvoir’s relation between the body and the social, ‘curiously slippery’ devices.21

Beauvoir and dualism

Despite differences between these two theorists, Jay’s analysis of the character of dualist dichotomy remains a helpful grid through which to begin to assess this important aspect of Beauvoir’s thought.22 The Second Sex exhibits at least three of the characteristics of the A/Not-A dichotomous structures isolated by Jay. Firstly, says Jay, in dichotomous distinctions, A is the one positive term. Not-A is only

21. It may also indicate that Kant's philosophy is less crudely dualist than Beauvoir's.
22. There is a difference between Jay's and Beauvoir's understanding of the relation between consciousness, language, and social reality. Jay argues that social dichotomies are kept in place through violence, and thus downgrades the question of woman's construction through signification. For Jay, woman's subjectivity is not really at issue - the problem is rather the manner in which women are represented and controlled: A/Not-A distinctions are a kind of violence inflicted upon women, tying them into place, forcing compliance as does physical violence. If for Jay women are ultimately victims, for Beauvoir they are, with some ambivalence, in bad faith. Beauvoir privileges the freedom of the individual and meanings over violence or other social influences. Jay tends to privilege social facts and realities over individual freedom.
the loss or absence of A, as in the ‘lesser [distorted] man’ notion (1991:98). For Beauvoir, although both man and woman are originally fully human (free), woman has abrogated this. That is, man and woman do not constitute two forms (A, B) of the class ‘human’. Man is a human being who has developed properly; woman is not a proper human being at all (SS:172). There is a sense in which, unlike woman, man does not become, but rather is born, a man, in that he has followed the course of development properly to be expected of him as a free being. Man and human are therefore contiguous terms (A). Woman was born with the same freedom but has sacrificed this, allowing herself to be crushed and mutilated in order to be a pleasing object to man (Not-A). ‘If the sexes are distinguished in this way, there can only be one perfect form, which, not surprisingly, is the male. Consequently, the female ‘form’ is not really a form at all, but only a deformation of the male’ (Jay 1991:97).

Secondly, ‘only the excluded middle, the essential empty space between A and Not-A, ... holds the chaos of Not-A at bay’ (1991:95). It is true that Beauvoir’s woman is associated with chaos or lack of proper self-determination. Her body subjects her to the control of nature, whereas man cunningly avoids this. It is only when she seizes control over herself that she can become A. The middle remains excluded: despite Beauvoir’s assurance that women will be able to retain their femininity in her ideal world, there is no emergence of the feminine in the masculine public world, rather a leap by the woman into masculine ways of being. The ‘principle of order that separates [A] from Not-A’ (1991:96) is strongly evinced in the principle that to be ethical, a person must rationally control his or her own life and not be controlled by other elements of the world, through dependency upon others, for example. For Beauvoir, the chaos of woman, the Other being held at bay, is to be overcome by incorporating the feminine into the masculine Same.

Thirdly, Jay says, ‘that which is defined, separated out, isolated from all else, is A and pure. Not-A is necessarily impure’ (1991:96). She claims further that ‘[d]eformities, privations of form, are unlimited, as is formlessness itself’ (1991:97) and calls this the ‘infinitation of the negative’. We have seen how for Beauvoir the masculine form is the unquestioned genuine human form, and is the choice made in good rather than bad faith. Transcendence, with its association with consciousness, is pure; immanence, with its association with the body, is impure. Further, *The Second Sex* is devoted to describing the myriad ways in which woman is debased and deformed through her ‘bad faith’ choice.

For Beauvoir, man is superior, woman clearly inferior, and there is no suggestion that man might be improved by adopting some feminine behaviours.

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23. Thus, although Not-A is only an absence or inferior, it is necessary to A, for A gains its presence, or its superiority, from comparison with the quality attributed to Not-A.
These, at best, are feminine preferences that must be tolerated in order to avoid outlandishness until they can gradually be transformed ‘so that her canons of propriety approach those adopted by males’ (SS:692) and, at worst, are useless foibles that will interfere with her ‘important’ life and work. For example, in conformity with her desire for a ‘nest’, instilled by her mother, the independent woman will make a home for herself, waxing her floors and cooking her own meals, instead of eating out as a man would, thus uselessly and foolishly exhausting herself, doing work that has been made far more difficult an ‘art’ by confined women than its value merits (SS:692-4).

When Jay’s three characteristics of dichotomous distinction are used as a framework for viewing *The Second Sex*, we do not find that the dichotomous categorisation of woman, as such, is the causal factor in woman’s inferior being. It is evident that for Beauvoir woman is the result of more fundamental dualisms (for example, between dependence and freedom, nature and culture), which will be discussed in more depth in chapter two. We have already seen that when it comes to making one’s life, Beauvoir’s thought offers no other possibilities than the either/or choice between transcendent activity and immanent passivity. One either controls or is controlled, is subject or object. Paraphrasing Jay on Durkheim, Beauvoir takes utterly for granted a dualist philosophy because she does not recognise the structure of her transcendence/immanence dichotomy, or its implications for the feminine (see Jay 1991:92, 94).

Jay points out ‘the enormous amount of social effort expended, of sustained cooperative work performed, and of oppression and violence done in the creation and maintenance of such social dichotomies’ (1991:100). Change is resisted because this style of thought makes other possibilities inconceivable: ‘the only alternative to the one order is disorder’ (1991:104). Thus, for Jay, power operates in a relatively monolithic and direct manner - downwards, from the powerful to the powerless. Beauvoir, on the other hand, may be criticised for discounting the full effects of power in creating woman, and for over-emphasising the power inherent in the individual.

**Conclusion**

*Is a salvage operation possible?*

Beauvoir has made several valuable points. There is no question that women do need to be subjects actively creating their own lives, and it is important that we do not allow ourselves to be blindly operated upon by external forces. It is true that the ‘selfless’ serving of others and economic dependence have left women open to abuse. Similarly, the feminine identity, viewed as a whole, is not positive,
is constructed from the masculine viewpoint, and is submissive rather than equal and reciprocal. Nevertheless, just how much of the reasoning of *The Second Sex* can be salvaged to produce Beauvoir’s aim of autonomy for women is less certain.

While the masculine subject is accepted as unproblematic, the feminine is profoundly flawed for Beauvoir. For her, woman must earn her subject status by taking risk, giving up the security provided by man. She must be independent, provide her own economic means and must devise her own ‘ends and aims’ (SS:21). It is through work in the public sphere that woman can be assimilated into masculine society, and thus be in a position to achieve transcendence. The problem with this solution is that it takes as given the world divided in either/or fashion between masculine and feminine, public and private, and attempts to annul the feminine category by moving women into the masculine. Whether assimilation is actually possible will be discussed in the next chapter, but equally important is that this move does not query the division itself, a division which, as we have seen, is to man’s benefit. The inference to be drawn from woman being told to become the same as man is that there is little of value in the feminine. Woman’s character is flawed and her traditional ‘private’ work in the home is considered worthless, while man’s character is incomparably better and his ‘public’ work is highly valued. For Beauvoir, women must give up the feminine values they hold to adopt masculine values; they must give up the private world to enter the public. That she raises no question of these divisions being changed points to a problem in the concept of transcendence.

As I remarked earlier, it is apparent that many problems in *The Second Sex* cluster around the question of what a human being is, and how subjectivity is created. I have noted Beauvoir’s ambivalence concerning to what extent, and at what level of their construction, people are to be regarded as social beings, created in the world. If there is no such thing as human nature, how is it possible that woman has been ‘mutilated’ while man has developed correctly? True, women do need to become subjects in control of their own destiny, but the giving up of the feminine to achieve this seems an impossible and unappealing step. Women feel that they are women, in a deep sense. They also value their femininity and its ideals, and understandably resist its denigration. Can they not achieve independence and reciprocity with man in a way that is more congenial to their self-respect than simply imitating the masculine, doing what man does, becoming the Same? Besides, in what sense can such a move be said to involve autonomy?

At mid-twentieth century, Beauvoir believed that Western women were free of serious external barriers to their emancipation. While we may want to disagree, pointing to the many barriers that are not even now overthrown, Beauvoir, however, was claiming that the constraint was mainly within women themselves.
and was no longer due to external factors. While it remains true that it is up to women to bring about the changes they want, the relation between external and internal constraints is more complex than Beauvoir finally allows, and I will be taking it up again, particularly in chapter four.

It would seem that, as feminists, we must look for a better answer than Beauvoir’s dichotomous verdict which seeks to obliterate the Other and which unrealistically disavows dependency. There is something perfidious in a philosophy which condemns one form of dependency, the economic dependency of women, while tacitly accepting men’s dependence upon women for domestic labour, not to mention the dependence of the superior masculine identity upon the negation of the feminine. Further to this, we can ask whether the implementation of Beauvoir’s suggestion that woman be assimilated would simply leave a newly disguised either/or schema in place, and the opportunity for new forms of discrimination. We can ask what actually becomes of the despised private world in her utopia.

What are Beauvoir’s basic concepts? Why is woman and the given so detested, and why is she to blame for her predicament? Can we learn more about what it is about the female body that causes such marked repugnance? What is the role of the body, the justification for transcendence as ideal, the nature of the subject and the mechanism for changing the self in her thought? How can it be that woman is a completely autonomous human being and yet is so influenced by the demands of the world? Where does Beauvoir’s notion of the individual as independent from the world come from? Must we accept the profoundly violent and unfeminine view that the self is created through the annihilation of the Other? Do these problems have a common basis in the dualism that is apparent in The Second Sex? To analyse these problems and to seek their resolution, we need to know more about where the dualism comes from and how fundamental it is. It is apparent that answers to all of these questions must be sought in the philosophy explicitly underlying The Second Sex, Sartre’s existentialism.
Sartre: The Problems of Explaining Woman through a Humanist Philosophy

Because of its great concern for human freedom and its vehement opposition to determinism, Sartre's existentialist philosophy would seem to be an excellent basis for building a strategy for women's emancipation. Sartre's desire to explain that man is a being who makes himself, and that this self-creation occurs in the world of human relations promises an escape from the essentialism of human nature and the possibility of change. The notion that humans are determined by nature has long been used to justify women's subordinate position. In the earlier philosophies of the Enlightenment, for example, while emancipation was advocated for men, nature was invoked as the reason why women must remain confined to the private sphere. Sartre promises definitive escape from this logic. So, how can it be that so many problems arise when a philosophy of freedom is applied to women and their subordinate position in the world?

The focus of this chapter is an interrogation of the philosophy of Being and Nothingness to discover how it can be that, in Beauvoir's use of it, woman emerges from it in such a poor light. Why is it that woman's only option for improvement is to become the same as man, a solution that seems contemptuous of the feminine? In considering the ethics of this philosophy - what kind of relations between self, other, and the world it supports - I want to determine what makes it so anti-feminine. Is it capable of supporting a more positive perception of the feminine? What would a more woman-friendly conception of freedom entail?
When we considered Beauvoir's statements concerning woman's becoming, we learnt that the 'one' who becomes a woman is a being whose main characteristic is an 'urge to freedom'. As we have seen, many problems in The Second Sex cluster around the question of what a human being is, and how subjectivity is created. Therefore, I begin by discussing Sartre's conception of the human being as a radical freedom. For Sartre, as for Beauvoir, the underlying 'free being' which confronts the other and contemplates the world, making choices and giving meaning, is consciousness.

**Consciousness, Freedom And World**

Sartre bases his notion of consciousness upon a critique of the Cartesian cogito, the being that knows it exists because it knows it is thinking. Descartes divides all things into two substances, 'thinking' and 'extended', that is, the mental and the material. Although he understands that the body and the mind are closely connected in some way, each influencing the other, the body, like all matter, is a purely mechanical, physical substance, while all types of mental sensation are of one kind, a pure inner experience of the thinker. Descartes' problem was to explain how body and mind are connected, and, ultimately, the relation between freedom and determination. This issue of agency continues to dominate many of today's debates concerning feminism, and is central to the differences between Beauvoir and Foucault.

Descartes did not get beyond conceiving of man as 'simultaneously free and determined', says Sartre, a position which Sartre cannot countenance (BN:569). Above all, he wants man to be absolutely free, arguing that:

two solutions and only two are possible: either man is wholly determined (which is inadmissible, especially because a determined consciousness - i.e., a consciousness externally motivated - becomes itself pure exteriority and ceases to be consciousness) or else man is wholly free (BN:570-1).

Sartre sought to overcome the possibility of man's actions being governed by factors external to himself by avoiding Descartes' separation of inner consciousness and exterior matter. He sought to explain the human being as a fully embodied being, giving itself meaning, absolutely in the world. If this could be done, there would, in effect, be no exterior world, or body, to have a determining effect upon man. (The non-existence of God was taken for granted). Since for freedom to exist meaning had to be self-given, such an approach must involve beginning with the least possible presupposition concerning man - that is, there can be no human nature. In other words, if man makes himself, he cannot
have pre-existing attributes which, in effect, determine his character and behaviour.

Not surprisingly, prior assumption concerning man in a philosophy which constructs him fully in the world immediately introduces the risk of incoherence, as we shall see. Despite understanding this, and despite his efforts to avoid it, this is the fundamental mistake Sartre makes. Because he wants man to be fully self-determining, he begins, like Descartes, with the fact of consciousness, but, although he empties this primary consciousness of all content and makes it an activity that directs intentionality towards the world, he assigns to it a feature that causes trouble. The problem is not that thought may be intentionally directed, but that Sartre makes this absolute: consciousness is the absolutely independent and spontaneous cause of all response to the world, of all meaning and action.

At the start, the human existent is confronted with a world which is an 'unformed plenitude of Being' that simply is (the 'in-itself'). It is forced to fill this gap of 'nothingness' by choosing, or inventing, particular ways of doing so. This is human destiny: we are 'condemned to be free .... we are not free to cease being free' (BN:567). It is in taking its stand that the existent transcends the in-itself and makes itself into a 'for-itself' - that is consciousness becomes the active, central, Subject, which produces itself and the world through its choices. We act in bad faith when we deceive ourselves, pretending that we have no choice in the world, when in fact it is only we who give meaning and order to an otherwise chaotic world.

Sartre insists that consciousness only brings itself into being through its contemplation of the world, and so is absolutely dependent upon it. This is an attempt to avoid the Cartesian dualism between consciousness and material world. However, because his overriding concern is with freedom, Sartre cannot allow the world to influence consciousness, which must remain pure, unalloyed and spontaneous - untouched by any exterior effects. As Merleau-Ponty says:

behind the idea of sovereign choice there was even in Sartre's thinking (as can be seen in Being and Nothingness) the different and really antagonistic idea of freedom which is freedom only embodied in the world as work done on a factual situation (1964:155)

Unable to reconcile his desire for absolute freedom with the opposing need to avoid essentialism and dualism, Sartre establishes a marked and telling divide between consciousness and world. Consciousness can reflect upon the world, endow it with meaning, and change it, but the world cannot have similar effects upon consciousness. Somewhat like that of woman to man, this relationship is not

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1. This conflation of subject and consciousness is a feature of humanist thought, such as Sartre's and Beauvoir's, and is noted and objected to by Foucault - see chapter three.
reciprocal, but operates in one direction. So, Sartre establishes as the foundation of his philosophy an incongruity, a consciousness dependent upon the world and yet independent of it, saying, 'Indeed it is impossible for a determined process to act upon spontaneity, exactly as it is impossible for objects to act upon consciousness' (BN:570). As Falzon says, freedom of this kind means that we must 'separate ourselves from the world and our own concrete existence' (1993:9). Able only to a limited extent to recognise the part played by others in forming the 'existent', Sartre's individual is extremely atomised. An example consistent with this is that the role of women in producing and raising children is ignored; Sartre's existent comes into the world fully grown and independent. For the same reason and equally unrealistically, the world that each individual enters tends to be an 'unformed plenitude', rather than a world made by other human beings.

This incongruity becomes clearly apparent when Sartre's thought is applied to real human examples, as when Beauvoir considers the case of woman. Her argument, on the one hand, hinges upon a subject that is essentially independent of the social milieu in which it has spent its existence. Male and female each is a subject, an intentionality, which must assert itself over the given world; each is radically free. This is an attribute of human beings - a part of our nature. Beauvoir takes this one step further, saying that to deny this freedom, to lie to oneself about it and to remain in the immanent state, is to be less than human. So, man, as transcendent, is fully human while immanent woman is not, and so we realise that 'human' equals the masculine way of being. The explanation for woman's condition is her own bad faith in accepting the world as given rather than accepting the challenge and rising above it, and so Beauvoir can scorn women for this dishonesty. But, on the other hand, she is hard pressed to explain how a being who is essentially and radically free can have been the object of such widespread and longlasting oppression. The answers she gives are unsatisfactory: As a free being, woman can make of her body what she will; she need neither bear nor take responsibility for children, yet it is this aspect of her body that accounts for her historical failure to transcend the mundane. On the other hand, Beauvoir employs the antagonistic idea that women 'prefer the easy slope', implying either that women are inherently lazy, or that the world has made them so. In both cases women are determined by exterior forces, and are not radically free at all.

We would expect that if the human subject of action is really made in the world, as Sartre claims, it must have a changing nature, since the world changes. Conversely, if it is not made in the world, but is a predefined, transhistorical and transcultural consciousness, then it is independent of the changing world and it does not change. Sartre's Subject/consciousness conforms to the latter alternative, thus raising the broader ethical question of sameness versus difference. Since the
Subject remains the same throughout history and culture, the possibility of changing subjectivities, and therefore of difference, is excluded.

The cause of these problems is Sartre's absolutism, and the obvious answer is to eliminate his initial conception of individual consciousness as absolutely independent. Sartre would, of course, object that this submits humans to external determination, and the consequent loss of agency, once more. To avoid such a stark either/or choice, we need a more sophisticated understanding of the complexity of the relations between human being and world. In the following two chapters, I will be describing how Foucault has approached the problem of agency in ways that begin to address this complexity. Meanwhile it is clear that to understand ourselves and our world, we need to get rid of the supremacy of consciousness and to include the effects of history and culture in our explanation of subjectivity.

It might be thought that the patently observable differences between individuals constitute a serious problem for Sartre's theory, but he deals with this by characterising them as matters of choice. As I will explain in the next section, just as consciousness chooses its actions, it can choose to have various emotions and habits.

The Self: Ego, Emotion and Will

An important aspect of woman's subjection, Beauvoir notes, is her willingness to comply with what is demanded of her. Today, while it is important not to ignore the incidence of violence and coercion, many, and perhaps most, Western women are free of direct external constraints upon their freedom. That women acquiesce, apparently freely, in their own subjection is often taken to be due to an emotional or psychic, 'internalised', state. That the compulsion 'to please' is widespread, affecting even many of those who want to free themselves, seems undeniable, but many women do also identify positively with and value their femininity and its ideals, and have a strong urge to make themselves in conformity with them, something that Beauvoir treats with almost complete disregard. On the face of it, this is surprising, but Sartre's theory of the emotions provides a theoretical justification for her poor estimation of women's motivations.

To explore this, I begin with a closer look at the cogito. Sartre agrees with Descartes that all consciousness is consciousness of something, but he believes that there is a first level of consciousness which is a translucent self-awareness, not of itself thinking, but simply of its being; that is, 'an immediate non-cognitive relation of the self to itself' (BN:12). I simply am, just as I can be aware of an
external object without consciously reflecting upon my awareness. To be, and to know that I am, are one and the same. Sartre calls this primary consciousness 'pre-reflective', 'non-thetic', or 'non-positional' and this, in turn, constitutes the possibility of reflective consciousness, in which there can be reflection upon the act of reflecting, or awareness of self-awareness. Except when we choose to reflect, we operate in the pre-reflective mode. It is, however, very important to note that this is not unconscious thought, but is reflective and intentional without the awareness of being so: 'as soon as there are cause and motive (that is, an appreciation of things and of the structures of the world) there is already a positing of ends and consequently a choice' (BN:594). These choices are intentional, but not deliberate (BN:594; see also 564).

Sartre disagrees with Descartes' understanding of the cogito as being inclusive of all mental perception including emotion. For Sartre, consciousness is above all rational, in the sense that its constructions and plans always have an intelligible objective, of which it is always capable of being transparently aware. He also rejects the existence of the unconscious, a necessary move if consciousness is to be totally free, since, for this to be so, it cannot be open to influence by what it cannot know, and thus control. Consciousness is an absolute awareness, a universal human attribute, individual only in the object it contemplates, and neither the ego nor emotional states affect it. Rather, it is consciousness that determines and creates the ego and its psychic states. The ego is in the world, and, like the world, is an object of consciousness. Sartre says that my ego, my will and my emotions are secondary in that they are produced through the rational choices of my pre-reflective consciousness:

Human reality cannot receive its ends... either from outside or from a so-called inner "nature." It chooses them .... [H]uman reality in and through its very upsurge decides and defines its own being by its ends (BN:572).

Emotions, thoughts and dreams are created for a distinguishable purpose, which is to overcome one's difficulties or problems with the world, through 'magically' transforming it. Emotion is a use of imagination, but where imagination can be used to invent new possibilities for ourselves in the real world, emotion denies the reality of the world. For example, to avoid acknowledging failure, we tell ourselves that the grapes we cannot reach are green anyway; or a girl bursts into tears in order to avoid speaking of a painful subject. Similarly, in his earlier Sketch for a Theory of the Emotions, Sartre explains joy as a form of impatience, an effort to 'realize the possession of the desired object as an instantaneous totality' (1971:72); sadness as 'a magical play-acting of impotence' (1971:70); and fainting as a means of escape (1971:66). Thus bad faith is a devious way of handling our psychic predicaments in ways

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that are most satisfactory to the ego. Consciousness, by contrast, is always cold and calculating in its decisions, distanced from affect, and in touch with the truth of the matter. An obvious incoherency that arises here for it seems that consciousness allows itself to be dominated by irrational desires.\textsuperscript{2} Nevertheless, this explains why Sartre and Beauvoir believe they can say that, ultimately, we are responsible for everything we do, even when our actions are carried out in conditions of extreme passion or under strong external pressures.\textsuperscript{3}

Sartre insists that will and emotion are absolutely necessary: 'Freedom is nothing but the \textit{existence} of our will or of our passions in so far as this existence is the nihilation of facticity ...'(BN:573). However, he sees them as secondary, and is extremely dubious of their moral status.\textsuperscript{4} In this he bears a strong similarity to Kant, who considers that moral action can be decided upon only by a free being, unbound by natural desires or particular ends.\textsuperscript{5} In other words, Kant, like Sartre, eschews emotion as an element in moral decision, and thus excludes one of the strong attributes of the feminine from the moral order.

Consciousness does not make only the initial choice of orientation to the world, but has a continuing and continual primacy and control over its choices. Sartre's discussion of the hiker who abandons himself to fatigue illustrates this (BN:584-7). In order that the hiker be able to act differently in relation to his fatigue, he must alter his original relation to his facticity and to the world. This is a radical change, says Sartre, but nevertheless:

2. Sartre tries to avoid this problem by dividing consciousness into pre-reflective and reflective. He wants us to think of the content of the ego as one of the objects that pre-reflective consciousness deliberates and acts upon. However, in doing this, pre-reflective consciousness is limited to that circumscribed field and it is only when consciousness reflects upon the self's intentions that it has access to the truth and can act in good faith. This is a clever attempt to keep consciousness pure, distanced, rational, but it is not really successful, for Sartre perfomces assumes that we can and do reflect upon our pre-reflective functioning, for he could not otherwise think of emotions as essentially acts of bad faith. For a fuller discussion relating to this, see LaCapra (1987:130-4).

3. I am disagreeing here with Sonia Kruks who claims that for Beauvoir 'oppression can permeate subjectivity to the point where consciousness itself becomes no more than a product of an oppressive situation' - at least insofar as this applies to woman (1992:100). On the contrary, in \textit{The Second Sex}, Beauvoir makes it very clear that '[woman] has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as object; she is not the plaything of contradictory drives; she devises solutions of diverse values in the ethical scale' (SS:82).

4. Note that will, as well as emotion, is a construct of consciousness. Sartre says that the common conception of moral life as a struggle between will and passion is 'a sort of psychological Manichaeanism which is absolutely insupportable' (BN:573).

5. Kant's categorical imperative is not a particular but a \textit{general} rule, and merely asks that we act objectively, according to the maxim that we must will only that which should become universal law. If a particular end is pursued, such as happiness, the will is not free, but is constrained to that end (Reiss 1970:19).
an abrupt metamorphosis of my initial project - i.e. by another choice of myself and my ends ... is always possible .... Thus we are perpetually engaged in our choice and perpetually conscious of the fact that we ourselves can abruptly invert this choice (BN:598).

We are perpetually forced to choose our becoming other than we are, because consciousness must never be determined by its object, the external in-itself, of which affect is a part.

The constant availability of choice explains why woman cannot excuse herself for her servile and immanent life by claiming that she is inspired by love or duty, by fear of disapproval or loneliness, or by lack of a better alternative. Woman's pre-reflective consciousness creates these emotions so that she can avoid the more difficult path of transcendence, and woman is aware of this. She is capable of imagining alternatives to her present life, and is not constrained by social bounds, such as precepts concerning wifely virtue and motherhood. She is essentially independent of the world, and is not truly baffled by the androcentric views presented to her.

However, while such an understanding is helpful in its assertion that woman has her own agency and is not a helpless victim, it effectively denies the social aspect, the relation of individual to world, a world which other bodies, both previous and present, have structured, creating its realities and possibilities. It is difficult to believe that the imagination is not limited to some degree by what it is possible to think within the social meanings available to it and that it is not therefore bounded, to some extent, by them. And, while the view that we need not be totally controlled by our emotions is also helpful, it is difficult to accept Sartre's view that the psychic self can be changed so easily, that the complex network of the past choices of the cogito can so mechanically be perceived and undone. In the following chapters, therefore, I will be seeking a way of conceptualising the subject of action that does not divide it from emotion, ego, body, world and other bodies, and yet does not deny it agency.

Since, for Sartre, differences between people are explained as the result of choices freely made by that consciousness, woman's feminine attributes are superficial. Woman is not another, different, kind of being from man: her important, determining part, consciousness, is the same, but she has failed to achieve the 'universal' standard that he has attained. Once she accepts the responsibility that her freedom entails, she will lose her 'mutilated' form to

6. Margaret Whitford has described Sartre's philosophy as 'voluntarist', by which she means that he accords too much weight to individual determination and too little to the social - to economic and cultural factors, for example (1989:153).
become fully human, the same as man. In Beauvoir's thought, woman cannot be emancipated as woman. Rather she must abandon her feminine self to become man, the Same. This formulation leaves no space for sexual difference to be accepted; rather, it is that which is excluded. This conclusion is further discussed in the following sections, where I consider the body, dualism, and the violent Hegelian dialectic, in which self creates itself by nihilating difference.

Dualism

Body, gender and world

Sartre wants to avoid idealism; he does not want to assimilate all reality into consciousness, despite its ontological primacy, and he does not want to divide the world into mental and physical substances. He attempts to avoid facing the incompatibility of these aims with the absolute freedom of consciousness by claiming that apart from this one 'spontaneous' form of reality, there exist only things in the world and it is in this world that we make ourselves. Whether he succeeds in carrying this through into his philosophy is another question; his difficulties can be seen clearly in his philosophy of the body and the way they haunt The Second Sex. In chapter one, I noted Beauvoir's ambivalence concerning the disadvantages of the female body, finding that she was inconsistent in claiming that woman is an absolutely free agent able to make what she will of herself and the world, and yet that her body has made it difficult for her to do so. In this section, I want to justify my claim that Beauvoir's dilemma is fundamental to the philosophical framework she uses, and in the next section I will show how this dilemma works itself out in Being and Nothingness.

When Sartre insists that the for-itself and the in-itself are embodied, he is attempting to unite body and consciousness, but, as Xavier Monasterio says, it is significant that he introduces the body to his discussion at a late stage (1980:50-1). That the body is fitted to a for-itself that has already been formulated as abstract consciousness is clear. In his effort to avoid dualism, Sartre quite properly maintains that 'the body is nothing other than the for-itself; it is not an in-itself in the for-itself' (BN:408), but the outcome of his relentless quest for all to be rationally explained upon the basis of his original assumption is a division

7. This despite his recognition that 'it is not profitable first to separate the two terms of a relation in order to try to join them together again later' (BN:33). The word 'relation' perhaps also exposes the fault, for how can unity have a relation to itself? In support, Marjorie Grene says that for Sartre 'the cogito has been taken as the unique and indispensable starting point of all philosophy' (1973:121).
of the body into two forms. It is, he says, the second form of body with which we should unite consciousness (BN:401). This is the lived body, which is perpetually surpassing both itself and the tangible body-for-others (BN:429-30). In Sartre's rather incoherent view, my body, which is myself, is an obstacle to 'myself' which 'I' (the transcendent) must constantly escape in order to 'be in the world' - that is, to be in that state of transcendence in which I act upon the world for-myself rather than simply being in the world, acted upon, in-myself (BN:430). What is clear from this is that the cogito is a constant source of entanglement for Sartre as he attempts to eliminate dualism. In fact Sartre is attempting to explain how humans can be free although subject to what he sees as the contingencies of the body, while also insisting that I am nothing but my body.

In the active subject body-for-me, and the passive object, body as being-for-others, we can recognise the masculine and the feminine bodies of The Second Sex. There is either the body which is subject over other bodies and things (man's), or there is the body which is the object of these outside forces (woman's). While, of course, both male and female bodies are often actually objects for others, woman's body has an inherent problem: because of its role in reproducing the species, it is precluded from being the Subject body-for-me. Furthermore, Beauvoir sees woman's body as both biologically and phenomenologically passive and receptive, and not at all as a Subject body-for-me in relation to man's, which is active, and not at all a passive object-for-woman.

So, Sartre has replaced the Cartesian extended substance with the object-world created by consciousness but has not succeeded in removing the problem of recurring dualism. As several commentators point out, it is in the body that this manifests itself most clearly (see Monasterio 1980; Aronson 1980:99-100; Barnes 1966:xxi; Grene 1973:134). For Sartre, the individual body-subject looks out from the centre of its world at the objects which it uses as instruments towards its own ends, simply reproducing the Cartesian division between interior and exterior in a more convoluted form.

8. Firstly, he describes my body-for-others, the body 'I' possess, consisting of flesh, bones, skin, organs, nerves, an object which 'I' can transcend. This body is 'empty', devoid of the consciousness that enters into the world and acts upon it (BN:427). Here it is notable that the 'I' and the body are already disarticulated, as though I can somehow exist without my body. Secondly, there is the body-for-itself, the body I am, my mode of participation in the world, the 'lived and not known' body (BN:427).

9. The formal definition of dualism is concerned with the division of all things into two categories, substances or principles. Whether Sartre is dualist in this technical sense has been much debated. Gregory McCulloch, for instance, argues that because Sartre's different modes of Being are strongly interdependent, because the for-itself is closely bound to the body and the world, and because the mind is not a substance, Sartre is not a Cartesian dualist (1994:3-4). Of
The existence of consciousness and volition enables us, some of the time, to choose our actions and have control over other things (including other bodies), but we also unavoidably incur affects as a result of our contacts with other things and bodies. Our volitional ability does not neutralize the fact that this body is in other ways similar to other things and we cannot choose to avoid the consequences which result from contact with them. As Monasterio says, this is precisely what Sartre has ignored (1980). Disavowal notwithstanding, bodies are subject to things, not only to emotional affect, but also to physical damage and to attack by pathogens, to agents of decay, and to inevitable decline and death, as well as to the involuntary excretion of various substances. Unfortunately for woman, in this dualist philosophy, such disavowal occurs through the mechanism of displacement on to the Other, as we have seen in the case of woman's despised reproductive capacity.

For Sartre and Beauvoir volitional consciousness is that which defines the human being as supreme actor in the world and consequently as the highest value. The ideal, transcendent human state requires human subjectivity over things. I must avoid being subjected by them, or by the given (as woman consistently is). In short, the body is distanced from consciousness by a conceptual filter which involves control, and I deny that things must inevitably affect me. This primary and radical separation of consciousness from world and body, and the subject/object dichotomy that follows, result in an abhorrence of that which cannot be transcended. This applies most particularly to the mundane, fleshly body, so inescapably a part of the for-itself (BN:444). The grotesque otherness of the world, and particularly of the facticity of the body, causes nausea. It is important to notice that Sartre carefully points out that this disgust is not due to the association of the body with matter that is physically repugnant, such as rotten meat, blood, or excrement, but is due to the 'contingency', or the uncontrollable, untranscendable, nature of the body. Rather, 'all concrete and empirical nauseas' are founded upon this uncontrollability (BN:444-5).

As man's Other, woman is identified with that which cannot be transcended, and in particular with the mundane, fleshly body; not only, then, is she the object
of disgust, but through this move, man is able to construct himself as transcendent. Transcendence depends upon the immanence it overcomes. This is why I say, in chapter one, that Beauvoir's denigration of the female body is based upon such a fundamental aspect of her philosophy and that it cannot be avoided. As I argued there, man's identity depends upon the definition of woman. As is now apparent, the problem originates in Sartre's subject/object dichotomy. Man, the One, the transcendent subject, could not exist if the Other, woman as passive object, did not. Not only must man disavow the contingency of his own flesh, he must make woman the unacknowledged bearer of it. The reproductive, 'passive', nature of woman's body becomes a problem only within this dualist schema. As I will now argue, what Sartre finally reveals in his extraordinary outburst of detestation of the female body, at the end of Being and Nothingness, is not so much revulsion at the physical 'stickiness' and 'slime' of the female genitalia, as his terror that, as he suspects, his Other cannot, in fact, be controlled.

Dualism

Keeping chaos at bay

The violence implicit in Sartre's philosophy, in which the other is always a direct threat to the self, a threat which must be countered if the self is to recover its subjectivity after having been objectified by the gaze of the other, has been noted by Merleau-Ponty (1973:159-64). Merleau-Ponty goes on to object to Sartre's single-minded dedication to the problem of the other, which he says is inadequate to express all that occurs in the world (1973:188-9). This criticism applies to Sartre's abstracted notion of the alternation of subject and object, an abstraction that is probably an inaccurate view of human interaction when applied between men, let alone between man and woman. As Monasterio points out, even when I am the object of another's action, I remain 'subject, center of affectivity' (1980:58). As Schutz also says, my looking at the Other does not constitute me as subject, her or him as my utensil, or object, for I am able to understand that this Other has its own existence and its own projects (1962:201). Again, Sartre's formulation is contradictory: On the one hand, the subject constructs itself only through keeping the object dichotomously at bay, but, on the other, the absolute freedom of the other must allow him or her to completely ignore the intentions of the would-be subject. Of course, Sartre realises this, but Schutz' argument is more

12. Schutz is over-confident in including women here; in fact his argument is perhaps sound only when the interaction occurs between men of the same status. Nevertheless, it serves to show that Sartre's argument is far too absolute and abstract, and badly flawed.
pointed: if both actors simultaneously recognise the other's freedom, Sartre's argument collapses.

It is with woman that the essential contradiction in Sartre's philosophy becomes indisputable. How can it be that this absolutely free being remains without coercion almost universally fixed in the object position? Sartre is caught in a dilemma; because there is no human nature, and humans absolutely give meaning to themselves and their world, he cannot make of woman a separate case, as have his predecessors Kant and Hegel, and yet to save his philosophy he must. Woman constitutes the thorn in the flesh of Sartre's argument. This, I believe, is the reason for his remarkable outburst concerning the female body and for his extraordinarily inconsistent claim that the character of women is essentially connected through the female anatomy to the in-itself.\(^{13}\)

Sartre maintains that the horror inspired by the slime he associates with the feminine is not a mere "projection" on to a neutral material quality (BN:771) but 'from the start it has a psychic quality' (BN:772): 'The slimy is *docile ... a moist feminine sucking* (BN:776). Similarly, he associates the horror of 'holes' with the feminine. A hole, any hole, is an appeal to the flesh to fill it, and the feminine sexual anatomy has the same obscene characteristic. Since women are "in the form of a hole", it is no wonder that they have a feeling of inferiority ('Adler's complex'). Women feel inferior because they *are* inferior, a sex that 'gapes open', an in-itself merely appealing to be filled (BN:782).

The symbolism employed here likens the in-itself to the female body and reduces woman to her body, her freedom abrogated by her unfortunate anatomy. If woman is an appeal, a hole asking to be filled, what is man? As we might expect, he is the filler of the gaping, empty hole that is the world, the giver of meaning, the for-itself. Sartre's phallogocentrism is finally brought out into the open: the signification of the world, the filling of the hole which is the world, can only be carried out by the bearer of the logos in the form of the phallus. But woman is more than the world to man; she is his Other, crucial to his construction of himself as masculine. To fulfil this role as his Other, woman *must be* a hole. It is only man, in Kantian terms the one whose proper drive is towards perfecting himself and the world, who can give meaning to her.

Woman has been transfixed here as what she is for-the-other. Sartre has said that '[the body] is the in-itself which is surpassed by the nihilating for-itself and which reapprehends the for-itself in this very surpassing' (BN:409). Is it possible,

\(^{13}\) So, Sartre did not need to wait until the publication of *The Second Sex* to be shown the inconsistency at the heart of his work. Of course he may have been only 'pre-reflectively' aware of this, but still this portion of *Being and Nothingness* is an emotional act of 'bad faith'. In this outburst Sartre is confronting more than the uncontrollable nature of the flesh.
therefore, for woman to transcend the designation man has given her? One obstacle is that notwithstanding his absolute notion of freedom, Sartre has given woman a special status in regard to the in-itself. Like the slimy, the gaping quality of woman's body is not neutral but has an inherent 'psychic quality': woman's body actually makes her the epitome of in-itselfness, while man is the epitome of for-itselfness. Then, as Sartre says, the for-itself creates itself through its nihilation of the given. In other words, man creates himself as for-itself through filling the hole that is woman. Woman cannot fill the hole, because she is the hole. The obstacle to woman's transcendence is that it is her given, in-itself, condition that supports the formulation of Man, the humanist universal, central, Subject, and she therefore constitutes an important prop for Sartre's existentialism.

We are reminded of Jay's law of the excluded middle which holds the chaos at bay (chapter one), when Sartre insists that the feminine in-itself must be kept at a safe distance: 'there exists a poisonous possession; there is a possibility that the In-itself might absorb the For-itself ... and the In-itself would draw the For-itself into its contingency .... Slime is the revenge of the In-itself. A sickly sweet feminine revenge .... it symbolizes the sugary death of the For-itself' (BN:776-7). So, woman must be held at bay, as the determined other, in order that man may construct himself as free, undetermined. In keeping with his explanation of nausea, Sartre's fear of the uncontrollability of his Other is primary; it is only after this that he finds her actual body repugnant. Woman is a dangerous threat; if not kept at a safe distance, man could be 'sucked in' to become like her, chaos, an undifferentiated plenitude of Being, castrated of his for-itselfness, no longer Subject, and giver of order and meaning: 'Beyond any doubt her sex is mouth and a voracious mouth which devours the penis - a fact which can easily lead to the idea of castration' (BN:782).

The problem of dualism in *The Second Sex* is now fully exposed. It has turned out that Sartre has a sexual dichotomy, and that he must make a special case of woman that may be considered even more derogatory of her than the special cases made by Descartes, Kant and Hegel, for whom woman does at least have a special, if lesser and complementary, merit. In *The Second Sex* we saw that to become free, woman must, like man, disavow her body. Now we see why within Sartre's philosophy she cannot, for not only does her body actually take the form of the in-itself but her otherness makes possible the representation of man's transcendence.

When Sartre makes consciousness the absolutely independent, spontaneous, source of all meaning, he divides it radically from the world. The result, as Aronson says (reminding us immediately of Sartre's descriptions of woman's body) is that the world becomes 'a moody, implacable given' (1980:96). The
privileging of rational consciousness negatively opposes it to body, worldly effects, emotion, and the feminine. This leaves the (masculine) transcendent unquestioned while sanctioning the attempt to exclude the other; rational man is taken to be a universal and desirable figure, while the attributes of woman are found wanting.

If woman is to be emancipated, we need a starting point which avoids dichotomy and woman must be relieved of the burden of the in-itself body which man has displaced on to her. Since she cannot be the Same in this dualist thought, another conceptualisation of the relation of body and mind is necessary. This means giving up the notion of transcendence, at least as it is conceptualised by Sartre.

Negation and the uselessness of cakes and flowers

If we apply the Hegelian dialectical schema to the masculine/feminine opposition, the feminine being is that which must be nihilated in order to create the masculine being. However, the feminine cannot be obliterated, for, as Descombes says 'Generally speaking, the same cannot be posited except as other than the other' (1980:40). Thus, the reason for the nihilation is not to wipe out the other, but to define it in such a way that it serves to posit consciousness (the same). LaCapra explains that the other is constructed as containing all alterity, thus allowing consciousness to be 'pure and homogeneous within itself ... devoid of any internal alterity that might impair its translucent spontaneity' (1987: 24). By projecting all alterity - internal differences, confusion, disparity - onto the other, consciousness is able to be utterly rational and free. LaCapra notes that this notion 'is repeated in different guises throughout Sartre's thought' (1987:24-5). LaCapra is right to wonder 'whether a logic of domination is central to the forms of analytic rationality that Sartre both employs and contests, as well as to the totalizing dialectic he more or less explicitly espouses' (1987:24).

As noted, the problem for Sartre is the pressure of modern egalitarianism which, within his form of logic, forces a recognition of the other as the same. The

14. Of course not only woman is affected by such interpretations and applications of Hegel. Helene Cixous saw that Hegel's master/slave relationship is implicated in the violent annihilation of the colonial other in order to constitute 'the white (french), superior, plutocratic, civilized world' (Cixous and Clement 1986:70-1). Alfred Schutz says that: 'To Hegel ... the notion of the Other is not merely indispensable for the constitution of the world and my empirical ego, but also for the very existence of my consciousness as self-consciousness' (1962:185).

15. As Levinas, among others (most notably perhaps Derrida), points out, this need to incorporate the other demonstrates philosophy's complicity with colonial imperialism, in fact with 'the whole of Western history' (Levinas 1969:46).
best that can be done, then, is to see the other as capable of being assimilated by
the same, which is Beauvoir's aspiration. Where Hegel's public/private dualism is
quite candidly expressed, and woman is kept firmly in place as other through the
necessity of the general welfare, the Beauvoirean argument involves a hidden
move. On the face of it, it eliminates the dualism through its effort to make
woman man's equal in the public world of transcendence, but in doing so it
incongruously annihilates her difference (which is essential to the construction of
the same). The difficulty, as Merleau-Ponty sees it, is that Sartre's is an:

intuitive philosophy which wants to see all meanings immediately and simultaneously.
There is no longer any ordered passage from one perspective to another, no completion
of others in me and of me in others, for this is possible only in time, and an intuitive
philosophy poses everything in the instant: the Other can be present in the I only in its
pure negation. And certainly one gives the Other his due, one even gives him the right to
affirm his perspective, the I consents to this in advance. But it only consents: how could it
accompany the Other in his existence? In Sartre there is a plurality of subjects, but no
intersubjectivity (1973:205).

Like Sartre, Beauvoir does not ask man to accompany woman in her existence,
she does not ask for intersubjectivity as Merleau-Ponty means it, but for
reciprocity in the formal recognition of her subjectivity. Femininity is for her
merely 'a dream of submission', a passivity that seeks to trap men, to suck them in
to her empty hole, whereas what is needed is 'two adversaries confronting each
other in their pure liberty' (SS:728). For her, woman's caring for the other has
been a useless exercise in submission, and the cakes and flowers, the waxed
floors and the home-cooked meals are to be jettisoned, along with the different
forms of intersubjectivity that women have developed. But, although Merleau-
Ponty is on the right track in his criticism of Sartre, above, he does not reach into
the kernel of the problem, which is that difference cannot be respected in a
humanist philosophy that posits the 'I' as the universal Subject of history, totally
spontaneous, transparent, pure and free, and the other as containing all alterity.

Now we see why, for Beauvoir, woman's only recourse is to become the
Same. But this is impossible, for woman and her body cannot be disposed of, in
representation or, as I will argue, in practice. In the Hegelian opposition, woman
is Other and she cannot so easily disavow her place in a schema that constitutes
her. If she were to do so, another Other would be needed, and so 'woman' would
be reconstituted. What is needed is a move away from the violent Hegelian

16. Beauvoir does argue for 'the possible existence of difference in equality' (SS:740), but this
belated effort cannot counteract the entire thrust of her philosophy, which is to exclude difference
by absorbing it into the only acceptable model, the Same.
dialectical schema, a different notion of the construction of identity, in a real body, in the real world, outside of this symbolic one in which Beauvoir is mired.

Ethics

For Beauvoir and Sartre, transcendence - changing the world, risking life, going beyond the given to take intentional, determinative, action towards oneself and the world - is the only mode of being that has moral status: 'There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future' (SS:28-9). Immanence, 'the brutish life of subjection to given conditions', on the other hand, is a 'degradation', a 'moral fault' and 'an absolute evil' (SS:29).

This view is very close to Kant, and it is worth looking at the similarities and differences of his position, for they help to expose the underlying issues, particularly with regard to the feminine. For Kant, the proper goal of man is perfection, through conscious transcendence of nature. This perfecting urge is natural to human beings, who are not creatures of instinct but can anticipate events and make choices about their actions. Thus culture is not exactly dichotomously opposed to nature, but is actually part of nature's 'design': it is man's nature to rise above nature. It is a paradox that man must accept the necessity of nature and yet this condition of unfreedom is against his nature for his natural urge is towards perfection. Only the free, willing, human being contributes to the perfecting of the species. The worst and most unnatural form of subjection is to be forced to serve another will, for in this condition man cannot act morally.

17. Kant's great achievement, in the Critique of Pure Reason, was to suggest that the laws of nature, as we know them, are human constructions, that, in order to make sense of nature, we must think of it as if it follows a plan. For him, we cannot directly understand the world through experience, but must do so through a mental framework, devised by our own reason. (Having recognised this, Kant, consistently enough, can speak confidently of nature's plans). Since Kant takes it as given that man is a rational being who, as a species, struggles to perfect himself through his own efforts, it follows that it is also helpful to think of history as if it follows this plan, even though we cannot directly perceive such a plan. (See Kant 1970a:51-3; Reiss 1970:36; Arendt 1982:8; O'Neill 1992). Thus, although patterns may be found both in nature and in history, we cannot know that these are anything more than our own constructions. This method of explaining developments in human society as though they had been intentionally directed was to be taken up and applied fruitfully by Foucault - see chapter three.
18 Consistent with this, Kant believes that all of those whose work implies 'dependence upon the will of others', such as servants, itinerant workers, apprentices, and 'women in general', are not fit to vote because of their lack of independent will (Kant 1970c:139-40).
Sartre and Beauvoir also take it that the human destiny is towards perfection, but where Kant takes this to be a long-term effort of the species, they apply it to the individual and its effort towards transcendence. For them, since the individual has complete autonomy, it is absolutely responsible for its own being and for the whole world; to be ethical is to admit this, and to act accordingly; to be unethical is to deny one's freedom. Beauvoir's censure of woman's compliance with man's designs upon her is very compatible with Kant's finding that only the free, willing, human being can have moral intention.

In his early Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime, Kant explains that women do not have moral principles, but rather a feeling for beauty: 'Women will avoid the wicked not because it is unright, but because it is ugly' (1960:81). While both sexes share these attributes, the beautiful is the 'proper reference point' for women, while for men it is the sublime (1960:77). So, Kant keeps the male and the female in strictly separate spheres, abhorring all idea of women attempting to enter the male world of the sublime. In this way he avoids the problems that arise in existentialism when the feminine is expected to follow the same moral precept as the masculine. When Beauvoir places woman in the same sphere, woman has to abandon her own moral values, which involve a different relation to her own body and to the bodies of others. This results in her own body becoming deeply problematic, and the particular feminine relation to the bodies of others being reduced to 'servility', 'futility', or 'mere necessity'.

It is not surprising that a philosophy which focuses so extremely upon the freedom of the individual is unable to see woman's body, with its role in reproduction, as anything but a disadvantage. That individuals are conceived as being quite independent of the bodies of others is shown by Beauvoir when she says:

instead of integrating the powerful drives of the species into her individual life, the female is the prey of the species, the interests of which are dissociated from the female's interests as an individual (SS:393).

Here, woman and 'the species' - other bodies - are opposed not merely in cultural thought and practice, but in the absolute sense: it is a matter of fact, not social usage, that the interests of woman and humankind do not coincide, for in failing to distance herself from the needs of her species, which do not coincide with her own, woman sacrifices her transcendence. Thus, existentialist ethics

19. Kant is especially against women acquiring learning, saying, 'A woman who has a head full of Greek, ... or carries on fundamental controversies about mechanics, ... might as well even have a beard ...' (1960:78).
20. Previously quoted in chapter one.
imply that it must be woman's ideal to dissociate herself from other bodies, from her particular involvement in the well-being and survival of the species. But, as bodies, we have vital needs that can only be fulfilled through a complex network of inter-relations with other bodies and things. Beauvoir and Sartre recognise this only up to a point; they do not incorporate it effectively into their philosophy, seeing the affects we incur as a potential contradiction to our freedom. They believe that humans are something more than embodied beings; in other words, pure consciousness enables us to 'rise above' our embodied state.

So, to achieve an ethical life in existentialist terms means not merely the absurdity of denying the vulnerability of the body, but the denial of its interrelatedness to other bodies. The pleasures brought by cakes and flowers, sex and babies have no moral significance (and do not even achieve the status of the beautiful), because Beauvoir, with Sartre, negates the interconnectedness of human beings in favour of absolute freedom from determination, and the absolute moral responsibility this entails. Despite Sartre's efforts to the contrary, his claims concerning the body become abstractions, rather than realities central to his argument. When our consciousness is privileged over our bodily or affective capacities, the body and its emotions, which compose our links with others, come to have an equivocal significance in ethical life. The subject conceives of itself as essentially atomistic in its constitution, the world external to it having little to do with its development, and ethics in relation to the other becomes a problem, since even love of others is a suspect emotion.

Butler is right in saying that Beauvoir's is 'a project that assumes that pure freedom exists only beyond the body' (1987:52), for the desired transcendence is merely an attempt to have woman join man in his fraudulent strategy of escape into the fantastic realm of pure consciousness. The fabrication of the universal, isolated consciousness can be seen as an act of power by one human group over others, enabling that group to justify its prerogative of power over those it has dualistically designated as part of the mundane carnal world. Man acts in bad faith in disavowing his own fundamental closeness to nature in his own body.

It is ironic that Beauvoir's 'emancipated' woman is determined by values devised to suit a body that is different from her own, and a sex that opposes itself to her own. The privileging of consciousness has created a particular conceptualisation of the masculine body which is more than 'mere meaning', for

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21. Beauvoir does see that the fact that humans are embodied in a particular way affects our perspective of the world, and we experience events in a certain way. Since it is the means 'of our grasp upon the world', it seems that we cannot simply separate our selves from our bodies. But, for her, it is meanings that matter, and if she allows that meanings do affect the body, as she does for example in her discussions of frigidity, this is a one-way process; body and consciousness remain divided, consciousness privileged as the source of all meaning and affect.
these meanings have become literally true, to an important degree. Man's body is not 'light' and unproblematic only in the realm of ideas. It is also produced in reality as unproblematic through it, and the world it acts within, having been constructed in accord with masculine desires, interests and bodily realities. The public and private worlds have been fashioned to suit this particular body, which has largely erased its mundane character, and particularly its connection to other bodies, through the relegation of reproduction to the private world. Thus man has, to a large degree, truly disencumbered himself of the tangible body. Meanwhile the female body is 'naturally' a misfit; it is especially problematic, just as the male body is unproblematic. Women can fit in only if they adopt masculine values and desires, which disavow as far as possible the carnal body, yet, as women, they remain responsible for bodily and affective life. Woman may have appeared, at last, on centre stage, but she drags behind her the weight not only of her own despised body, but of all bodies, in both everyday and symbolic senses.

If women choose to become the Same as men, another problem remains: the body cannot so easily be disposed of, for it must actually be provided for. Man has displaced these burdens on to woman, but on to whom is woman to displace them? According to Beauvoir, as Gatens points out, if women were to join men in achieving transcendence (becoming fully human), they would have woman, and her body as their '(absolute) Other' (1991:59). This is not mere symbolism: If some women disavow the uncontrollable body and join man on the positive side of these dualisms, it is necessary that the actual work of the body be assigned to another Other. This disavowal of the body means a continuation of the devaluation of those who take on the labour that women have traditionally carried out, while the values of 'successful' women are based upon the masculine or 'human' standard. Meanwhile, women are divided both without and within, learning to judge themselves and other women according to the phallogocentric criteria.

So, Beauvoir's negation of difference and her aim of becoming the Same means the acceptance of the existing hierarchy of values and rewards, which has been devised to suit male bodies in violent opposition to female ones, and the continuing negation of the value of 'woman's' work, in order to constitute the value of the Same. This is why an ethical feminism insists upon the consideration

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22. In cases where women workers have succeeded in improving the status of their work, a new category of worker has often taken over the tasks that deal most closely with bodily functions. For example, the nursing profession has become hierarchised, so that an aide now carries out many of the nurse's former tasks: an elite of nursing staff has been created who are reluctant to do shit work' (Game and Pringle 1983:111). Further, whereas previously the nurse offered a lengthy mothering care to the patient, the affective body is now ejected from the hospital just as rapidly as its 'purely physical' state will allow, to recuperate as best it can on its own, or with the help of outside women acting in a private, unpaid, capacity.
not only of 'difference' but of bodily difference and embodiment in the construction of its values and practices. To achieve a truly ethical outcome in the effort to emancipate woman, rather than attempting the thankless and impossible task of slotting her into the existing hierarchy, what is needed is a complete re-ordering of the beliefs that underpin our system of values and our notion of the ethical - a reordering that does not depend upon woman (or other Others) as outcast.

I will begin to discuss what this might mean in concluding this chapter. Since we must avoid dualisms and essentialisms, clearly, what must be sought is an ethics which is capable of acknowledging difference(s) and the discarding of the moral absolutism of Beauvoir and Sartre.

**Conclusion**

Sartre calls his existentialism a humanism, a term applied to the modern form of thought that puts man at the forefront of all history, as the causal will behind all social and cultural phenomena. In its emphasis upon human agency and freedom, humanism has affinity to many of the unquestioned convictions of modern political thought, especially the leading status of individual rights and freedom, convictions which leave little space for recognition of the inter-relational labour traditionally carried out by women. As noted, Sartre's man is godlike - absolutely free and absolutely responsible: 'Our responsibility is thus much greater than we had supposed, for it concerns mankind as a whole .... In fashioning myself I fashion man', he says (1956 [1946]:292). The political problem with this is not that man makes himself in the world, but that each individual is conceived as making himself in isolation, and, in order to sustain this radical freedom, rational consciousness is privileged as a universal Subject which remains untouched by history. Martin Heidegger, who is highly critical of Sartre's humanism, agrees that Sartre does not recognise 'the importance of the historical in Being' (1977[1947]:220) and objects to the essentialising emphasis upon consciousness.

In his 'Letter on Humanism', Heidegger brilliantly illuminates the problems in Sartre's existentialism. First of all, he says, humanism looks in the wrong place to explain human being: 'the humanitas of homo humanus is determined with regard to an already established interpretation of nature, history, world, and the ground of the world, that is, of beings as a whole' (1977:202). This presupposition, this failure to ask what Being is and what is its relation to the essence of man, means that humanism is a metaphysics, a science that assumes what it seeks to explain. With regard to man being defined as a rational animal, says Heidegger:
it finally remains to ask whether the essence of man primordially and most decisively lies in the direction of \textit{animalitas} at all. Are we really on the right track toward the essence of man as long as we set him off as one living creature among others in contrast to plants, beasts and God? ... In principle, we are still thinking of \textit{homo animalis} - even when \textit{soul} is posited as \textit{spirit or mind}, and this in turn is later posited as subject, person, or spirit. ... But then the essence of man is too little heeded and not thought in its origin, the essential provenance that is the essential future for historical mankind. Metaphysics thinks of man on the basis of \textit{animalitas} and does not think in the direction of his \textit{humanitas} (1977:203-4).

Heidegger objects to man being defined in relation to animals, \textit{not} because of an idea of the superiority of man over animals, but because it makes an assumption that he is one of the Same. Man, he is saying, should be defined by what primarily makes him in his difference, his humanity, not by his animality.

So, Heidegger questions the quality of a thought which assumes that this essence of rational consciousness is even the right dimension, place, or direction, in which to seek an understanding of man. The problem with such an essence is that it is not questioned; it becomes the basis of a thought which relentlessly applies logic to 'explain' man on the basis of its own presupposition, whereas Heidegger's notion of the Being of man is a being-in-the-world, which means that the essence of man's being, as such, cannot be explained in a final, definitive sense, but must be sought in each instance with reference to the particular historical world - to the joint endeavours of the collective in time.

Not only does Sartre give man an essence which fails to give him an appropriate provenance, and fail to appreciate the significance of history, but the nothingness which he finds so nauseating is the realisation that there is no foundation for ethical life, an irrational terror that indicates an enduring dependence upon absolutes.\footnote{According to Descombes, in repudiating Sartre's use of his work, Heidegger describes Sartre's existentialism as 'a simple revival of the most traditional metaphysics for the benefit of a 'man' who had asked for nothing of the kind - a metaphysics which saw in creative causality the divine attribute \textit{par excellence}' (1980:31).} But man is not the 'sovereign and unique subject' that he takes himself to be. His experience of himself as 'a thing crushed by the dark weight of other things' (EA:7) \textit{is caused by} his humanist conception of himself as disembodied consciousness, rightfully independent of the mundane, and supreme ruler over it. If he were to recognize fully that he is a carnal body, dependent on the historical collectivity for his being, the ambiguity might be dissolved, the feminine need no longer be feared and despised, and the space for difference would emerge.

The word 'humanism', Heidegger says, should cause us to reflect not only upon man but also about the "nature" of man, and 'even more primordially about
the dimension in which the essence of man, determined by Being itself, is at home' (1977:225). Sartre is one of those who does not subject Being to reflection:

Being is all too easily represented as a "being" after the fashion of the familiar sort of beings which act as causes and are actualized as effects .... The esti gar einai ["for there is Being"] of Parmenides is still unthought today. That allows us to gauge how things stand in the progress of philosophy. When philosophy attends to its essence it does not make forward strides at all. It remains where it is in order to constantly think the Same (1977:214-5).

The valuing of man involved in Sartre's notion of transcendence, does not free man (or woman) to be; rather it subjects us to validation, says Heidegger. '[Valuing] does not let things: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid - solely as the objects of its doing'. Being is prior to thought, it cannot be subjected to validation, 'subjectivizing beings into mere objects' (1977:228). So, Beauvoir's prescription is a problem for women not simply because they want to retain 'valid' aspects of woman's character, not simply because they do not want to become man. Rather, it is a problem of being let to be, a problem of finding the space for difference to exist. It is not, as Moi believes, that woman wants to retain her femininity as difference from man, but that she wants to be, without dictation as to what this must mean, without being drawn into the tyranny of the Same (see Moi 1994:183). It is from this point that 'woman' must be put aside, for with the help of Heidegger it becomes clear that what is being conceived is not the difference of woman from man (which of course merely lets her 'be invalid') but the possibility of multiple difference, or more exactly, of the particularity of each individual.24

It is perhaps unkind to say of Beauvoir that she 'does not think the truth of Being and so fails to recognize that there is a thinking more rigorous than the conceptual' (Heidegger 1977:235), because she did try to think woman's Being as had never been done before, and yet Heidegger is right and it is her adherence to Sartre's conceptual framework that impairs her work. Applying Heidegger's comments to Beauvoir, in the final analysis, she failed because:

'[Existing philosophy and its use of current terms] and the conceptual language corresponding to them were not rethought by readers [of Being and Time] from the matter particularly to be thought; rather the matter was conceived according to the established terminology in its customary meaning (Heidegger 1977:235).

24. In this context, speaking even of 'women' becomes problematic - and has caused feminist theorists much agonising. My position on this is that the problem of identity for feminism is conceptually insoluble because of the insufficient nature of philosophy in requiring neat conceptual categories (at least as it is understood today).
If we reject a woman's essence that lies in her subject/object relation to man, what can we put in its place? If the essence of man is properly to be found in his *humanitas*, then the essence of the feminine is to be found in *femininitas*, and the essence of the masculine in *masculinitas*. In other words, as Heidegger insists, difference is paramount. This is *not* an effort to return women to a universal, defining, and thus simplistic and inaccurate essence. Rather, it is an effort to rethink our Being from a foundation that does not begin by categorising and valuing. In seeking women's emancipation, we need to know what women are today; this means not defining, but situating women in the world in which they 'dwell' - to understand the particular structures of meaning and social practices in which they are articulated. In addition, we need to have some conception of what women may be - that is, of what we mean by freedom.

Since Beauvoir claims it is a central part of the structure of our world, how seriously is the Hegelian master/slave relation to be taken as the basis upon which self and identity is created? At what point do we move from the representational to the real? Is there a danger in forgetting that the symbolic is not real? Yet, as Cixous points out, it *is* real, 'society reproducing to perfection the mechanism of the death struggle: the reduction of a 'person' to a 'nobody' to the position of 'other'....' (1986:70). If we accept this, that Hegel describes, through symbolism, the operation of an already effective, real, system, is it not this reality we need to take into account, rather more than the symbolic? This insight opens up the field of struggle; it is no longer one of symbolism, but of real, political, events. In that case, women need to understand how power operates so that they can participate effectively in the world, and our understanding of the part played by social relationships and power in creating subjectivity need refining. Rather than being the fundamental means by which the feminine is constructed, and the cause of women's subordination, the symbolic representation of woman becomes *one* of the tactics to be combated. Meanwhile, we need to be wary of Hegel's portrait, in that it becomes a discourse of truth, a discursive framework within which we see ourselves as constructed, and cannot escape.

I conclude that it is only in abandoning the Sartrean humanist philosophy that woman's emancipation can be theorised. So, what will we look for in an

25. I must acknowledge again that this is the positive aspect of Beauvoir's work in *The Second Sex*, where she initiated such an examination.
26. As Paul Rabinow argues, representations are indeed social facts, but he would agree that one representation must not be allowed to dominate, becoming a privileged philosophical 'fact' (1986).
27. Beauvoir later recognised that her philosophy was on 'the terrain of individualist, thus idealist, morality', even though she had misgivings as early as 1940 (Sonia Kruks 1992:98 quoting Beauvoir 1962:34). Sartre also recognised some of the shortcomings of *Being and Nothingness*, in particular its failure to take political, historical and social effects more fully into account.
alternative philosophy, one that is able to incorporate the possibility of woman's emancipation, to provide for difference? Firstly, since I have shown how Beauvoir's underlying philosophy places woman in a conceptual double bind, in which she becomes guilty of bad faith for failing to achieve transcendence and yet cannot really do so because it is she who makes possible man's transcendence, the dichotomy between transcendence and immanence must be done away with. Secondly, Sartre's disavowal of interdependency leaves woman in the impossible situation of supplying the needs of others, a task man demands of her but refuses to acknowledge, while at the same time she is asked to imitate him in his 'independence'. We can not, therefore, accept the unrealistic notion of absolute individual autonomy. Since agency of some kind is essential to emancipation, the dichotomy between free will and determination must be thought differently. Thirdly, unfortunately for women, the 'immanence' that Beauvoir asks us to renounce includes what is bodily and emotional, and what is particular to the female body. The domination of the bodily passions by consciousness repeats the familiar traditional principle of morality, a dualist principle that cannot free woman. Consciousness and body must therefore be unified. Fourthly, following Heidegger, women's being can no longer be subjected to validation. For example, Beauvoir castigates woman's apparent 'complicity' in her own oppression. We need to rethink feminine being in its particularity without the moralising blame that comes from applying a 'universal', that is a masculine, judgement. We need an ethics that avoids the duplicity of universalisation, that does not seek to make valid, but rather to let be. In summary, the reason I turn to Foucault in the next chapter is that he promises an understanding of human being that does not follow the philosophy of the Same but attempts to think differently, so allowing space for difference.

Accordingly, the scope of freedom became more restricted in his later work, where he attempted a blend of existentialism with Marxism. However, my argument has been that Sartre's theory is faulty at its very foundation. It follows that attempts at modification could not really succeed unless the original concepts were abandoned. In fact Sartre never did abandon the 'I' which stands isolated from the world, or his humanistic view that places man at the centre of everything (see LaCapra 1987:145-62). This is not, of course, to suggest that nothing of value can be found in his work.
In the last chapter, I showed that the problems for the feminine in *The Second Sex* originate in the existentialist conceptualisation of consciousness as foundation of self, as Subject of action. With the help of Heidegger I explained how, since humanism tells us what man is, and how he must behave, it is not a philosophy of freedom but of the Same, in which, as we have seen, no space exists in which to affirm difference. It is therefore not a philosophy in which the feminine can find the freedom to *be*. The 'sovereignty' which women were said to enjoy in the nineteenth century lay in the feminine domestic and personal, rather than in the masculine public sphere. And now the humanist Beauvoir was urging women to seek a freedom that merely meant giving up one form of confinement for another, this time by becoming the Same. Within this logic, twist and turn as woman might, she cannot find true freedom.

Foucault took up the same set of problems surrounding the issue of freedom as Sartre, that is the questions of human being, subjectivity, agency and intentionality, that Sartre had attempted to resolve. In particular, Sartre had been concerned to avoid dualism, to place humans fully in the world and to find a way of making them free. Foucault tackles these problems from a different perspective, questioning the basic assumptions of modern thought such as Sartre's. As a student, he had adopted from Canguilhem an approach that interrogates the historical forms taken by knowledge and of rationality. Perhaps also inspired by Heidegger who insists that Being is still unthought today, Foucault begins by investigating what is the unthought of modern thought - the taken for granted of humanism.
While Foucault cannot be considered a disciple, Heidegger's thought, as articulated in the 'Letter on Humanism', has many resonances in Foucault's work, and in a final interview Foucault acknowledged his debt, saying that, 'My entire philosophical development was determined by my reading of Heidegger' (1988a:250).\(^1\) The 'Letter on Humanism' therefore serves as a helpful orientation to Foucault. The link with Heidegger is especially noticeable in Foucault's anti-humanism, in particular in his desire to interrogate the conditions of possibility of humanist knowledges, and to explain human being, not in terms of a transcendent consciousness, but in terms of the particular historical 'home' in which it must make itself. Heidegger was certainly among those who inspired him to make the effort to interrogate the assumptions of philosophy, and to 'think differently, instead of legitimating what is already known' (Foucault 1986[UP]:9).

How does Foucault solve the problems of being that are raised by humanist thought? Firstly, to make space in philosophy for difference, he sets out to consider history not as a continuous evolution but as a series of events, and 'man' not as a universal subject of history but made in the 'time of culture' - as creatures of the time in which we live. Secondly, he recognises that the forms of knowledge and practice within which subjectivities are constructed are politically based - that is, they are produced within relations of power. Thirdly, he understands that a particular ethical relation to the other is required in a philosophy that recognises no universal truth of human being.

These three aspects of being, which I will consider from a feminist perspective in this chapter, are all concerned with the relation between the self and the exterior world. In the next chapter, I will consider the internal relation, the ethical relation of self to self, Foucault's fourth aspect.\(^2\) Of course, the underlying question running through both chapters is the thorny issue of freedom - the possibilities for freedom of a (feminine) subject that is created fully in the world.

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1. By this he did not mean that other thinkers, most especially Nietzsche, were not equally or more important to him. Bernauer, in particular, warns against the 'lure of linking him with a particular thinker or a certain school', pointing out that the creation of such a lineage 'would face an inescapably dizzying number of options' (1990:95). To link Foucault too closely to Heidegger, or to any philosopher, is to fail to grasp his originality and so to underestimate him.

2. The two are in fact intimately linked; I am not adopting an internal/external dichotomy. Neither am I suggesting that there is a significant break in Foucault's thought with the later two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, an issue I discuss in chapter four.
The Philosophical Alternative to Humanism

Foucault avoids Sartre's initial error of privileging consciousness by allowing the human being prior to socialisation to be only of a very 'thin' character, a body with certain capacities, which Paul Patton has described as 'no more than ... a being capable of acting, capable of responding in one way rather than another to a given situation' (1989:268). Thus, in his opening move, Foucault brings the construction of the subject fully into the world and avoids dualism. In the same move, he endows each individual with a form of power, the power to act, which constitutes an elemental foundation of his theory of power.

Inspired by Heidegger and Nietzsche, Foucault sets out to 'think philosophy differently'. Firstly, he insists upon eliminating the founding subject: 'There is a history of the subject as there is a history of reason. One cannot expect the history of reason to evolve from the initial founding act of a rationalistic subject' (1989:238). This notion of an 'inviolable identity of origin', says Foucault, 'makes possible the form of knowledge that is a search for truth, a search for that original identity (1977b:142). History, then, is 'the history of an error we call truth' (1977b:144). Further, he says, 'Far from being a category of resemblance, this origin allows the sorting out of different traits' (1977b:145). There is no descent of man from an original truth. So, beginning without the founding concept that Sartre, following Descartes and tradition, had adopted, he avoids that crucial initial step towards categorisation, the division of things into classes or kinds, the general form of dualism (see Foucault 1989:244). Categories, says Foucault, are the most unrelenting form of the subjection of difference:

Categories organize the play of affirmations and negations, establish the legitimacy of resembleances within representation, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts. They suppress the anarchy of difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights, and prescribe their task of specification with respect to individual beings. ... they appear as an archaic morality ... that the identical imposed upon difference. Difference can only be liberated through the invention of an acategorical thought (1977b:186).

Thus Foucault eliminates from his thought what I have found to be an insuperable problem for feminism in the example of Sartrean philosophy. Where Sartre sought relentlessly to build logically upon his original assumption, Foucault doggedly seeks to think acategorically, and to apply this to real people in the real world. Rather than entering into type-casting, he wants to analyse, as historico-political events, the forms of rationality through which subjects make themselves. Thus, despite his occasional blunders on the topic of women, Foucault's philosophy is fundamentally capable of encompassing difference, and so is of great value in the struggle of women, and all other others, for freedom.
Foucault's acategorical thought expresses the 'univocity of being'; it does not oppose world and individual, flesh and consciousness, self and other. Foucault notes that there have been at least two philosophers who did not divide things categorically - Duns Scotus and Spinoza. They, however, were interested in preserving the unity of being, while Foucault is interested in:

an ontology where being would be expressed in the same fashion for every difference, but could only express differences. ... Differences would revolve for their own accord ... and being would no longer be a unity that guides and distributes them, but their repetition as difference (1977b:186-7).

As Foucault points out, the elimination of categories frees difference from 'the domination of identity', from 'the law of the Same as a simple opposition within conceptual elements' (1977b:192). I have argued that for Beauvoir's woman it is the opposition of body and consciousness that is most telling. At the outset, Foucault eliminates this problem by simply taking it for granted that body and mind are one. Often, where in conventional 'Cartesian' mode we would speak of people, persons, consciousnesses or selves, he prefers to speak of bodies, putting fully into practice Sartre's stated view that consciousness is nothing but body. Unlike Sartre's and Beauvoir's, Foucault's body is not divided between given and transcendent; for him the body is always made in the world. In refusing the (masculinist) philosophy that allots the given body to woman, Foucault provides us with a philosophy that does not at the outset annihilate the feminine.

We have seen how the separation of body and consciousness has left woman unable to achieve, as woman, the transcendence required to achieve human being in Beauvoir's philosophy. Through a different conception of history, Foucault's 'archaeology' does away with the necessity for the type of cogito that is at the centre of the concept of transcendence, and so allows space for difference to be recognised. When history is conceived as a continuous coherent system, as Foucault says, the 'sovereignty of consciousness' is given a 'privileged shelter' (1972:12-13), with the consequent exclusion of difference. Archaeology 'thinks difference' and avoids the preconceptions that Heidegger had warned against by taking history to be not a linear maturation but a series of events seen against a background that is empty.

The significance of this for feminism is that with the exclusion of the 'chaos' of the chance event, the possibility of being as a product of history is denied. When humans are defined as rational animals in charge of history, then the 'chaos' of difference is excluded, and the feminine is confined to being woman, the other or the same, rather than being free: to be, as Heidegger puts it. So, it is in the interests of difference that Foucault sets out to see history as a series of events, which bring new forms of subjectivity. As James Bernauer says, 'The reduction of
difference to nonbeing that is the fruit of dialectical reasoning is precisely the adversary against which Foucault's philosophy of event is struggling' (1990:97).

Like Heidegger objecting to the presuppositions of humanist thought, Foucault is generally concerned about our imprisonment by what we take for granted. He has suggested various ways that a 'critical ontology of ourselves' might be carried out. In *The Order of Things* (OT) he began by considering effects that form a boundary to the manner and content of our thought. 'Archaeology' interrogates the discursive events, the changing 'ordering of things' that constructs and connects humans' thought, speech and actions. He finds that the epistemic basis of the modern era is the assumption that human consciousness is the founding subject of history, provocatively asking whether man does in fact 'really exist' (OT:322). The problem is not merely that the truth of 'man' is circularly referred back to himself as the source, as Heidegger had pointed out, but that humanist thought deals in a kind of doubled truth: man as transcendental subject and man as an empirical object: an 'empirico-transcendental doublet' (OT:318). Each of these ways of seeing man has the other as its Other, upon which it depends. As we have seen, transcendental thought creates the human as a transcendence of the given, which it negates while depending upon it and taking it for granted, as its Other. Similarly, empirical theories of man as a biologically determined creature take for granted that he is the Subject who can know and transcend himself, while continuing to rely upon the negation of this. Since empirical others are defined in terms of the knowing subject, which is historically masculine, the feminine is the object and the other of science, and, as we have seen, within transcendental thought the feminine is associated with the mundane. As I will show in the next chapter, this type of thought has other profound repercussions, finally involving the way that the modern subject firstly constructs or perceives of its self and its relation to the world, and then how it relates to that self.

The study of actual experience, phenomenology, is an attempt to overcome the problems inherent in these approaches (of reduction on the one hand, and of man as supremely independent being on the other), an attempt to develop a theory of the subject that could encompass both aspects of human being and to place human being fully in the world. Foucault argues, however, that phenomenology continues to rely upon the universal figure of rational, knowing man, and merely provides support for the doublet. While it is not necessary to follow this argument in depth here, Foucault's estimation certainly applies to Sartrean phenomenology, which openly declares its humanism and maintains a telling division between consciousness and the rest of the mundane world, including the body. 3

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3. Debate continues over Merleau-Ponty's final position (see, for example, Bernauer 1990:11-12; Diprose 1994:115; Langer 1989:157-74; Madison 1990:63-78). Langer and Madison both argue cogently that Merleau-Ponty did not solve the problem of the constituting subject - of the relation between body and consciousness. - but that his contribution towards it was considerable. It seems
example of this is the way that Beauvoir sees pregnancy as introducing into a woman 'an alien element' (SS:54). As I have shown, this problem is so fundamental to humanist thought that it cannot be resolved. In the interests of knowledge and freedom, Foucault suggests, therefore, that humanism is a creation that must be abandoned.

In our manipulations of the 'empirico-transcendental doublet', we fail to recognise that consciousness cannot transparently apprehend all that exists in being, for there is also the other dimension of our reality, the realm of the unthought. This, of course, is the realm in which woman has an uneasy existence, the realm of the Other. Foucault's effort to eliminate dialectical thought through placing the construction of the subject fully within the time of culture, was directed at eliminating the category of the Other, at incorporating difference within the realm of the thought.

Jacques Derrida had been critical of Foucault's early efforts in this direction (Histoire de la Folie, 1961), arguing that the unreason which Foucault claimed was excluded, in fact remained not outside but inside reason, as the condition of its possibility. Foucault responded to this criticism not by recanting, but by extending his analysis. In 'What is an author?' written in 1969, Foucault suggests that 'there exist properties or relationships peculiar to discourse [which are] not reducible to the rules of grammar and logic'. Rather, he thinks:

Perhaps it is time to study discourses not only in terms of their expressive value or formal transformations, but according to their modes of existence. The modes of circulation, valorization, attribution, and appropriation of discourses vary with each culture and are modified within each (1986a:117).

With this more complex view of the operations of discourse Foucault came to consider the historical effects of power. This allowed him to eliminate consciousness as Subject, and therefore as the author of the 'true scene of

that no-one doubts the significance of his work, including Foucault, who explains why feminists have found phenomenology so useful when he says, 'it does indeed provide a means of communication between the space of the body and the time of culture, between the determinations of nature and the weight of history' (OT:321).

4. Rosalyn Diprose has produced a fine alternative argument that sees body boundaries as much more fluid and interfused (1994, see particularly:111-18).

5. Foucault also noted the challenge of structuralism and of psychoanalysis to the philosophy of the transcendent subject, structuralism through its account of the role of language, which lies outside the dominion of individual consciousness, in constituting meaning, and psychoanalysis through showing that the unconscious could not be reduced to meanings conferred by the subject (see Foucault 1988a:17-23).
confrontation with madness' (1979:25-6). Further, for him the text was no longer privileged, but became a reciprocal cause/effect of acts or events.

The point for a feminist appraisal is whether Foucault's philosophy depends upon the unreason that has been excluded, as Sartre depends upon the feminine. I argue that this is not the case; rather than depending solely upon an excluded difference, the subject is effected through the operations of power. Foucault's fight is to allow difference the possibility of assuming 'various subject functions' rather than to be dichotomously excluded (within or without) (1986a:120).6

Other critics from within the humanist position have taken it that in placing the subject fully in history, Foucault has taken the side of determinism in the freewill/determinism dichotomy, denying individuals the possibility of agency. Foucault sidesteps this, as he does all dichotomies, saying that it does not follow that humans, their Subject status denied, need become entirely helpless objects of forces greater than themselves. As I will explain, freedom is not for him an either/or matter, as it is for Sartre.

**Freedom**

Foucault has always resisted demands that he justify his concern for freedom. For him, the point is that since there is no ultimate truth and no essential foundation for philosophy, there can be no 'much-heralded theory that finally encompasses everything, that finally totalizes and reassures' (1977:xii). In fact such truths are creations of power that are to be viewed with suspicion, its creators 'terrorists of theory' (1977:xii). I believe that Gary Gutting is correct when he argues that for Foucault the role of philosophy is not to provide 'grounding for normative judgements ... We do not need a philosophical theory to establish that the oppression and exploitation of factory workers, prisoners, or the mad are wrong' (1989:282). Hubert Dreyfus 'explains' Foucault's 'desideratum' of 'freedom of personal choice' as something 'he presumably carries over from his early allegiance to existential philosophy' (1987:320). But 'freedom of personal choice' is far too slight a description of Foucault's preoccupation, which is more accurately described as a concern with the possible determination of the modern

6. Except for oblique feminist references, which I take up later, recent scholars have largely ignored the dispute, perhaps wisely realising that 'to reify 'Foucault' and 'Derrida' as objects of some exclusive choice' is not necessary or productive, particularly since Foucault's turn to the analysis of power, 'while not constituting a repudiation of his earlier work, does in fact move beyond the slightly hasty identification of the excluded term (here madness)' (Oxford Literary Review, commentary, 'Cogito incognito' in Foucault 1979:8).
subject through overwhelming external forces and conditions that dominate it. This is hardly a 'personal' matter.

The radical distancing of the intentional core of the self from its existence in the world means that Beauvoir must discount the effects of women's embodied experience, despite her efforts to the contrary. That is, if woman is to be radically free, she cannot be radically affected by her experience. Foucault, by contrast, brings the making of the human being fully into the world. For him, we do not begin as a radical freedom, but as a body immersed in the world. Since we are embodied beings formed through and within the time of culture, we cannot simply deny the existence of historically contingent limits. We begin in an unformed state, having only certain capacities and a degree of choice of response to the range of possibilities available, and it is within the historically contingent world that we construct ourselves and make our choices. As Foucault has put it, 'man does not begin with liberty but with the limit' (quoted by Bernauer 1988:64).

In contrast with the heady rhetoric of the modern liberal-humanist discourse on freedom, Foucault's seems a dreary message that is often met with hostility. But what he offers is the possibility of understanding what our limits are, how they are constructed and so how they might be expanded or changed. Thus he offers the possibility of increasing our freedom, rather than allowing ourselves to be ruled by delusive, or unthought, ideas. If the possibilities he offers us are less inspiring than Beauvoir's, they are also more realistic and offer a better chance of escape for woman from the violence that humanism does to her. For ethical reasons, Foucault is reticent about explaining people to themselves, and he has little to say about women, but his conceptualisation of human being and freedom is far more capable than Beauvoir's of explaining their being without impugning them, of encompassing them in their differences, and of allowing the possibility of an increase of their freedom.

The fact that the limits within which we make ourselves change historically, and are contingent, does not mean that they are not real. In other words, saying that there is no essential truth of being does not mean that there are no human-created realities, or truths. What it does mean is that realities are, or hold the possibility of being, a little more open to modification. For example, in the modern era we still generally take ourselves to be not of a contingently and historically formed character but to be members of a species, whose proper impetus is towards perfection of self and world. This view has quite real effects upon ourselves and our world, founding our relationship to both, leading us to believe, for example, that our essential being can be scientifically ascertained, or that the merit of certain people over others, such as man over woman, or of one race over another, is demonstrated by their greater degree of changing the world. The practices flowing from such beliefs are hierarchical and discriminatory. We
have, for example, seen how woman is 'framed' by this humanist horizon, and is treated accordingly. As James Bernauer says of Foucault:

The single experience that was always at the source of his thought was the reality of imprisonment, the incarceration of human beings within modern systems of thought and practice which had become so intimately a part of them that they no longer experienced these systems as a series of confinements but embraced them as the very structure of being human (1988:45).

Foucault finds that the most significant modern limit upon our possibilities is our ever more precise definition through the humanist 'sciences of man' - psychoanalysis, psychology, medicine, biology.

Of course, for Foucault 'there is freedom everywhere' in the sense of our being able to respond yes or no to certain possibilities, and it is to this limited basic freedom that he refers when he says that a relationship of power cannot exist between one subject and another unless both subjects are free. A totally unfree person would not be human but a 'thing' or an 'object' with whom a relationship is not possible (1988:12). As he says, even those who are subjected to an extremely unbalanced power relation usually have some possibility of resistance - of ruse, escape, suicide, jumping out of the window, or of violence (1988:12). However, the importance of this basic freedom can be overemphasised, as Sartre does in Being and Nothingness, while consideration of the actual limits of what is possible (including what is possible for a particular form of subjectivity) is neglected.

In addition to this elementary form of resistance, which is not always in practice significant, Foucault says that we need not take ourselves to be victims of history's determination, accepting that we must be as we are. He does not suggest that this is a matter of simply being honest about our freedom - of acting 'authentically', of refusing to act in 'bad faith'. Rather, he says, understanding ourselves as historically determined beings 'is to take oneself as object of a complex and difficult elaboration' (1986a:41). He thinks that it is essential for our freedom that we come to understand what our limits are - that is, exactly how we have been elaborated in order that we be able to make ourselves differently.

Thus freedom for women is not simply the ability to act voluntarily, to free the essential self from domination, but is tied up with what is possible for us to be, to think and to do, as the particular bodies that we are in the time of our culture. Where Sartre and Beauvoir see the subject of freedom as essentially separate from the environment in which it has developed, Foucault sees our forms of subjectivity to be part of that environment, affecting it and being affected by it, forming and being formed by it. Where they view the important part of the self, consciousness, as essential and unchanging, Foucault, akin to Spinoza, views the
whole body/self as dynamic and complex, as formed within its relations with the world as a whole (Spinoza Ethics II, Prop 13: Lemma 3, Proof, and Postulates). Where Sartre thinks we simply need to act upon our existing freedom, Foucault is interested in expanding the limits of choice, through an understanding of the systems that enclose us. Archaeology seeks to free us from being slotted into the framework of History, and the later genealogy helps to free us from further unthought limits.

True to his refusal of the either/or of categories, Foucault does not reject the philosophical inheritance absolutely. Perhaps the most important instance of this is contained in his attitude towards Kant's understanding of Enlightenment which, despite its links with humanism, he esteems for having 'formulated a philosophical question that remains for us to consider' (1986a:43). This question he finds is his own: the inquiry into the nature of our limits, toward understanding 'the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognize ourselves as subjects', and toward the possibility of being, thinking, acting differently (1986a:46). In other words, Foucault places himself in the philosophical tradition - and not only of Kant, but of 'Fichte, Hegel, Nietzsche, Max Weber, Husserl, Heidegger, the Frankfurterschule,' - in trying to answer the question, "What are we today?" (1988d:145).

Concentrating on discursive analysis, the archaeology of The Order of Things had not considered the part played by power and desire in the emergence of events, discourses, statements. By 1970, in 'The Order of discourse' Foucault was noting the link of discourse with desire and power - in the spirit of that time saying that 'discourse is the power which is to be seized' (1984:110). He came to see that power was an important aspect of the unconscious rules of discourse and of historically-particular forms of rationality. He described these as 'discursive apparatus', which serve strategic ends within the relations of power that exist within all relationships, as I will explain below (1980 [PK]:196-7).

With the insight that human relations are inevitably relations of power, his question came to be expanded. He now wants to know the cost to the other of the historical form of rationality (1989:245). He asks what is power and, allowing no division of body and consciousness, how it operates in depth on individual bodies and their souls to create particular forms of subjectivity.
Political Consideration of Humanism: The Effects of Power

The notion of freedom at the heart of Sartrean humanism is for Foucault only a 'pseudosovereignty'. To use Heidegger's terms, the assumption of *homo animalis* with his distinctive, essential consciousness predetermines man, while paradoxically claiming that he is free. Foucault explains that this rhetoric of freedom tells people that they have control over their lives and have power in society, when in fact they have little of either (see 1977b:221-2). It isolates, or 'individualises', by claiming that individuals are totally and personally responsible for the condition of their lives, and it 'subjectifies' through the human sciences that have developed from the relentless application of a logic that 'explains' man on the basis of its own presupposition of what man is. As Foucault says, the humanist discourse equivocally describes humans as absolutely free self-determining creatures who must nevertheless submit to laws of truth, nature, society, and 'destiny'. Thus, through this double-dealing formulation, humanism 'prohibits the desire for power and excludes the possibility of power being seized' (Foucault 1977b:221-2).

Although it did not invent it, modern humanism employs the 'logic of identity' in which the Same excludes difference. Following from this, and from its belief that the proper pursuit of man is perfection, the humanist political and ethical project is to make Identity (man) subject over the entire world. As we have seen in the case of woman, under this regime the Other can either be assimilated, to become the Same (in which case, as I have argued, other others will be needed), or it can continue to be subjected to the authority of the Same. An even clearer example is perhaps provided by modern colonal practices and by the more recent forms of economic and cultural imperialism. The Same is the only model, and this form of humanist ethics, in which freedom or human rights are 'limited at certain frontiers', is dogmatically presented as providing a universal model for freedom, says Foucault (1982a:15).

So, for Foucault, humanism is a regime of power which employs the rhetoric of autonomy as a tactic while actually creating modern forms of (subjected) subjectivity. In *The Order of Things* he had criticised the modern human sciences for their circular thought. Now he asks a connected question in a more political manner:

How does it happen that the human subject makes himself into an object of possible knowledge, through which forms of rationality, through which historical necessities, and at what price? My question is this: How much does it cost the subject to be able to tell the

7. I say clearer simply because white women are often seen, and see themselves as, comrades of white men, whereas racial divides tend to be more clearcut.
In answering the question 'at what price?', Foucault begins to counter humanism with the study of the historical operations of power in creating knowledge and truth. These have been created through struggles with other 'popular' and 'naive' as well as with other 'erudite, exact historical' forms of knowledge, which have been buried, disqualified and subjugated (PK:82-3). Foucault uses the term 'genealogy' for the study of these struggles, where he exposes the way that power creates the knowledge and the truths within which we construct and understand ourselves. In the modern era, this knowledge has taken the form of 'globalising discourses with their hierarchy and ... their privileges of a theoretical vanguard' (PK:83).

Genealogy exposes the fact that the modern versions of history and knowledge are actually produced within a struggle of competing rationales and viewpoints. Rather than being produced through a search for truth, knowledge is produced in a struggle to create the authorised discourse, which becomes truth. Genealogy produces an understanding, not simply of the limits within which we construct ourselves, but of the way that power and truth are linked. Genealogies are 'anti-science', opposed primarily 'to the effects of the power of a discourse that is considered to be scientific' (PK:83-4). In Discipline and Punish and in The History of Sexuality Volume One, Foucault shows how this power/knowledge acts upon individuals, upon this or that group, to restrict their freedom in a particularly insidious way, under the banner of liberation. He shows exactly how we, in our age, are creatures of our time.

The relation between power and subjectivity is an essential aspect of freedom, for Foucault. It is vital, therefore, to understand exactly what he means by it. The failure to appreciate his particular usage of the term, and the consequent taking of it for granted, has resulted in considerable misreading of the intention and direction of his thought. Some exertion is required, because his efforts to understand and describe the complexity of the cumulative effects of our choices and actions have resulted in several ways of speaking about power that can be

8. Terence Turner, for example, could hardly be more mistaken when he claims that Foucault has made "discourses" the manifestation of an equally transcendental, extra-historical demiurge called "Power" (1994:35). Foucault's basic notion of power is the reverse of Turner's characterisation of it; it could hardly be more immanent. As Judith Still says, there are many 'patterns of reading-response' to an author. Turner, I think, belongs to her category of "school" or 'sect' responses those who ... will happily condemn out of hand and indeed expend some vitriol with little or no experience of the texts themselves' (1994:150).
In the following section, I concentrate on the aspects of power that are essential to my argument concerning women’s subjectivity and freedom.

What is power?

As noted earlier, at the foundation of Foucault's conception of power is a body with certain capacities, capable of acting with a certain degree of choice. This elementary action does not, of course, occur in isolation, but has effects upon the actions of others. In this regard, it is helpful to think of Spinoza who suggests that humans be viewed as bodies in motion which inevitably collide or interact with other bodies, causing a change in speed and consequent positive or negative affects. The relation between these moving bodies is akin to what Foucault means by power, and so for him power is an action upon an action:

In effect, what defines a relationship of power is that it is a mode of action which does not act directly and immediately on others. Instead it acts upon their actions: an action upon their action, on existing actions or on those which may arise in the present or the future (1986b:220).

Foucault goes to some trouble to tell us what power is not (see 1981 [HS]:92-3). Power does not emanate from a central point, it 'is not an institution, and not a structure; neither is it a certain strength we are endowed with' (HS:93). So, for him, power does not inhere primarily, for example, in the state, the law, patriarchy, large business organisations, the economic system, in racist or other discriminatory regimes, or in individual bodies. He is not, of course, denying that certain bodies, certain sections of society, or certain nations have great power over others, in the usual sense of the word. What he wants us to consider is how these 'terminal forms' of power have come into being, and whether they are quite what we take them to be. Rather than taking them as given at the outset, and

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9. As both Still and Spivak point out, there are obstacles that are almost insurmountable in describing something new that is perforce outside existing language. The result is doubled meanings and contradictions, neither of which are to be seen as failure (Still 1994:155; Spivak 1992:150-3). Possibly Foucault's writings could be more clearly expressed, but the point is that they contain new concepts that cannot simply be slotted into the old, as we are accustomed to do, and therefore much more effort and magnanimity is required in the reader. It is only too easy to slot his work into the accepted categories, to complain as does Charles Taylor, at its 'obfuscation' and its 'patina of false consciousness', and thus to fail to appreciate it (Taylor 1989:277).

10. Spinoza first establishes the identity of mind and body (Ethics II, Prop. 7), and that it is better to study the body first (Ethics II, Prop. 13). The degree of speed or slowness of the body depends upon its combination with or its decomposition by other bodies. Greater activity brings joy, less brings sadness (Short Treatise on God, Man and his Well-Being, Appendix 2, 'On the human Soul'; also Ethics III, Prop. 9; Ethics IV, 38, 41). Emotions, thus, are not mere imaginings of the mind but are corporeally engendered (Ethics II, 18, schol).
attempting to oppose or change them from this position of ignorance, Foucault wants us to consider carefully from the ground up how the 'life' or activity of individual human beings comes to accumulate, forming 'chains or systems' and, alternatively, how they fail to do this. Power, he says, 'must be understood ... as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate'. As these force relations intersect, oppose, or supplement one another, they may become organised, finally 'crystallizing' into institutional forms and organisations.

What Foucault wishes to emphasise is that the modern form of accumulated power does not primarily operate through crushing the real person and his or her desires, but that it creates that person and those desires in the first place, that it does not often need to crush, because it creates us in a form that is docile and cooperative. This is not to say that people and their desires are not sometimes crushed or repressed, but that it is the recognition that we are created through the action of others upon our potential action that is evaded in theories of repression. Those philosophies which assume an atomistic disembodied consciousness, such as Beauvoir's, also deny this primary creative effect of power. As a result, neither can explain in positive, respectful terms how it is that we obey, or why we collaborate in our own subjugation, and instead try to cure or blame us.

Obviously we cannot escape from power and its operations. Like its close relation, freedom, power is unavoidably 'everywhere', and it is what produces.\textsuperscript{11} What is unacceptable about power in this its primary sense, therefore, cannot be its existence or its operation. Rather, it is lack of reciprocity in power relations that is objectionable, above all when domination occurs, when the asymmetry of forces is fixed over a long period and reversal has become practically impossible. Patton's definition of domination is helpful here: 'What is crucial is the exercise of power over another in order to maintain a form of capture of the other's own power or capacities [to act]' (1989:269-70). So, it's not that members of a dominated group lose their power of action upon others or upon the world, it is that it is invariably expropriated and turned to the use of the dominating groups. The dominator increases his power to act upon the world by appropriating the actions of the dominated upon it. In Foucault's terms, domination means that another acts to permanently control the range of possibilities within which we choose our actions and construct ourselves, so that our actions and our selves are formed as completely as possible to suit that other's requirements. So, domination means that we do not have command over our powers of acting, and conversely, freedom means to be in direct command of them. As Deleuze says, interpreting

\textsuperscript{11} In saying that power is productive or positive, Foucault does not mean, as is sometimes assumed, that it produces only 'good' effects. On the contrary, it may produce something many would consider 'bad'. An example is the twittering, foolish Mrs Bennet in \textit{Pride and Prejudice}, or perhaps the narcissistic woman described by Beauvoir.
Spinoza, '[man] is free when he comes into possession of his power of acting' (1988a:70).

However, domination is never complete, and resistance to this capture is sure to occur however ineffective it may be in reversing the situation. As Foucault says, for a relation of power to exist, the other must be able to act, and cannot be completely crushed. In fact the capacity to act is very nearly the same thing as the capacity to resist - it is to be alive, to be capable of movement (see Deleuze 1988:92-3). 'The relationship between power and freedom's refusal to submit ... cannot be separated' (Foucault 1986b:221). While it is probably impossible for absolutely all of a person's actions to be captured, if they were, the relation would not be one of power; the other would not be an actor, but a thing:

a power relationship can only be articulated on the basis of two elements which are each indispensable if it is really to be a power relationship: that the other (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions open up (Foucault 1986b:220).

Total passivity, on the other hand, is brought about in the other through violence: 'A relationship of violence acts upon a body or upon things; it bends, it breaks upon the wheel, it destroys, or it closes the door on all possibilities' (1986b:220). Foucault is not denying that the exercise of power may include violence, but this, he says, is an instrument of power, not power itself, and he repeats, '[Power] is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions' (1986b:220).

From the simple basis of bodies and their forces, Foucault begins to examine what occurs when bodies make contact. There are 'divisions, inequalities and disequilibriums' immanent in all relationships (HS:94). These imbalances are what he calls 'relations of power', but he soon abbreviates this simply to 'power'. Finally, the cumulative force that comes from these imbalances becomes power, for Foucault, and it is this meaning that he generally uses when referring to it. Power 'is a name we give to a complex strategical situation in a particular society' (HS:93). As Foucault's examinations of historical change show, it is at those times when forces realign and regroup that subjugated forces may align to become effective, and domination may be overthrown.

There is a difference between power as the unavoidable action of bodies upon the actions of others, and power being exercised over others. It is clear that the actions of one person, however 'innocent', unavoidable and necessary, must affect

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12. Note the close link to freedom here. As observed earlier, for Foucault a totally unfree person would not be human but a 'thing' or an 'object' with whom a relationship is not possible.
the actions and possibilities of others. Thus Foucault does not posit the
fundamental hostility towards the other of Hegel. But when power accumulates,
forming systems, and 'crystallizes' into institutional forms and organisations, it
may well become dominating and is properly to be resisted on the ground that
freedom, the full use of our own life-powers, is our preference to subjugation.

Foucault does not suggest, as does Beauvoir, that domination is to be
overcome simply through the exercise of the ability to say yes or no. Nor does he
say, as she does, that domination exists, ultimately, through the moral failure of
the dominated. He is uninterested in good and evil - for example the deserving
status of the poor or the dominated is not central to his problematic, nor the moral
status of dominators; it is the operations and effects of power that he wants to
uncover, so that we may gain both a much wider field in which it is possible to
say yes or no, and the further possibility, to be discussed in the next chapter, of
positively creating ourselves. What he is doing is giving the underprivileged tools
to use in carrying out this work for themselves, rather than taking the superior and
judgemental tone of Beauvoir, who is constantly telling us what to be, what to do,
what values to espouse, and finding us unworthy if we do not follow her precise
prescription.

**Power and the body**

Consistent with his basic concept of power as action upon actions, Foucault sees
power as acting upon bodies, rather than as ideological effects. For him power
does not 'seize on' the consciousness of a 'presupposed human subject' through
ideology, but operates materially upon the bodies of individuals to produce
particular forms of body, that is to affect the way in which the body acts, its
attitudes and its modes of everyday behaviour (PK:125; also 58, 61). To
understand the present-day operations of power, he says, we need to ask not what
kind of individual, but 'What mode of investment of the body is necessary and
adequate for the functioning of a capitalist society like ours?' (PK:58). And,
indeed, feminists can ask what mode of investment of the female body has been
suited to capitalist society, and what connection this has with Beauvoir's finding
'existence made body' to be a 'strange ambiguity' (SS:737).

If for Foucault body and mind are one, this is not, of course, to say that he
does not recognise a distinction between mental and physical activity, as I will
shortly explain in relation to his concept of 'soul'. Neither does he deny that ideas
have powerful effects, but these, he insists, act upon the body. He rejects the
theory of ideology, not only because of its implied mind/body split, but also
because it presupposes a universal truth and an extra-worldly human subject who,
if not fooled by ideology, would have direct access to this truth. The existentialist
notion of bad faith asserts, somewhat similarly, that humans have access to truth but they choose to deny this. Quite unlike either of these, Foucault conceptualises the knowledge available to us as produced through the contingent operations of power, which bring about different truths in time. These truths, in turn, act upon bodies, creating corresponding subjectivities.

The mode, content and intensity of power, this action upon bodies, varies with time, and so different bodies are produced historically. For example, with the rise of capitalism, there was an increase in the intensity with which power began to operate upon bodies, a change in its manner of application and in its precise target. The feudal economy had functioned through levies and signs of loyalty, and the principle upon which power operated was 'the everyday perception' of pain acting directly upon the body (DP:9; see also 11, 219). As long as people surrendered what was due, it mattered little what their feelings or attitudes were. In the capitalist economy, what is extracted from bodies is 'time and labour, rather than wealth and commodities' (PK:104). Thus, rather than simply giving up a proportion of what they have managed to produce and making certain obeisances to the feudal lord, in capitalism individuals have to be slotted into the productive process. They have to be formed and shaped with more intensity, in order to maximise production, a vital requirement in this competitive system. From this point of view, the bodies of the workforce must be suitable to 'nourish' the machines, and, more broadly, the bodies that compose the population must be suitable to sustain the wider capitalist system of operation. In feudalism, the population was scattered, and the demands of power were discontinuous in time. By contrast, in capitalism constant effort and surveillance is necessary to keep individual bodies in the form from which the most efficient and constant extraction of labour is possible, and to control and shape the concentrated populations in a form which makes possible the most effective supply, distribution and consumption (of labour, materials, goods, and capital) (HS:139-41). In other words, with the modern forms of economic production, 'power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behaviour' (PK:125).

As in the mode of production described by Marx, there is a need to 'increase the subjected forces and to improve the forces and efficacy of that which subjects them' (PK:104). To achieve this, a far more subtle and deep form of control is necessary, and, because of the numbers involved, an efficient form that can be applied not singly, as in physical punishment and torture, but collectively. What eventuated was ideal, a form of discipline which is self-imposed, and which 'acts in depth on the heart, the thoughts, the will, the inclinations' (DP:16). Where the

13. Although Foucault is androcentric in these descriptions, it is possible to glimpse some of the ways that women might have been included in such a broad strategic aim.
older form of control acted upon the body's capacity to feel pain, the more recent form acts upon its capacities for thought, emotion, desire and volition - or as Foucault puts it, upon the 'soul'. As he says, 'it is always the body that is at issue - the body and its forces, their utility and their docility, their distribution and their submission' (DP:25).

In describing the modern technology of power in this way, Foucault is not proposing an 'economic reductionism'. Rather, the functioning of power is to be examined from the lowest level upwards, for 'anything can be deduced from the general phenomenon of the domination of the bourgeois class' (PK:100). He sees the mechanisms of power as beginning in small, isolated, always embodied, ways and only eventually coming 'to reveal their political usefulness and to lend themselves to economic profit' so that they are colonised by economic and state systems (PK:101). The schematic description of the different effects of feudalism and capitalism upon the body, thus, can be made only after detailed investigation, and not assumed (see also DP:26). In other words, it is only after the event that the operations of power appear to have been fully intentional and to have succeeded.

Returning to the question of Foucault's treatment of the body, his soul is not the 'spirit' of theology, and neither is it simply an ideological notion, with no embodied reality. If it were, my claim that mind/body dualism is absent in Foucault's work would fail. Rather, the soul is a particular form of embodiment: 'it exists, it has a reality, it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of .... methods of punishment, supervision and constraint' (DP:29). The soul is the historically constructed field in which such modern concepts as psyche, subjectivity, personality and consciousness, their accompanying scientific knowledges and discourses, and the claims of humanism have been created (DP:29-30). So, Foucault is reminding us that these modern knowledges are not based upon an unchanging truth, 'man', but upon an historically contingent construction, and, just as the construction that is modern woman has a real embodied being, so has this construction, which he calls the soul. The 'violence-ideology opposition' is thus abandoned, but the techniques of control may nevertheless seize the physical body, as in torture, or be addressed to the soul, as in corrective training, surveillance, normalisation, examination and confession. Both, Foucault insists, are bodily techniques. So, when he says that with the new regime of punishment, 'One no longer touched the body, or at least as little as possible, and then only to reach something other than the body itself' (DP:11), he is not returning to a mind/body dualism. The 'something other' is that aspect of the body he calls soul, rather than that part which is visible and tactual. Thus I claim that critics such as Terence Turner who asserts that Foucault has simply reversed 'the old structuralism of langue' whose locus was the mind, to create its opposite, a locus of the body (1994:35), are mistaken. Although it
would be surprising not to find remnants of the all-pervading dualism of our thought in Foucault, read with care and attention and a certain generosity, he offers an understanding of human being that avoids the violent body/mind binarism that has been so central to the construction of woman and other Others.

Sartre attempts to explain how humans can be free although subject to what he sees as the contingencies of the body. He fails because he wants absolutes, in particular an unqualified freedom; he cannot accept the uncertainties and uncontrollabilities, and thus what he sees as the determining aspects, of the body, trapping woman in an insoluble bind in the process. Foucault, on the other hand, explores what degree of freedom humans can achieve within the contingencies that make up the world, including their own selves. With the univocity of being the problem of determinism is dissolved; as man 'is erased, like a face drawn in sand at the edge of the sea' (OT:387), so are the problems that he carries with him, and woman can glimpse her own problems melting into a world of difference.

**How power creates modern individuals**

Here I want to give a broad outline of Foucault's understanding of the modern mode of action of power, leaving some of the more specific details, particularly of the effects of power upon the internal relation between self and self, for the next chapter. I want to give an idea of the 'toolkit' Foucault offers that women may use to develop for themselves an understanding of the particular ways that modern forms of power have affected them, enabling them to challenge and expand these limits. As he says:

> The role for theory today seems to me to be just this: not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyse the specificity of the mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge. ... The notion of theory as a toolkit means: (i) The theory to be constructed is not a system but an instrument, a logic of the specificity of power relations and the struggles around them; (ii) That this investigation can only be carried out step by step on the basis of reflection (which will necessarily be historical in some of its aspects) on given situations (PK:145).

Thinking about the development of the modern form of power, Foucault suggests that the power to punish began to change its mode of operation in the late eighteenth century. Previously, men and women felt the power handed down from the king directly, through the physical pain of punishment and torture. The spectacle of torture was intended to demonstrate the king's ability to punish more horribly than the crime itself, and so to discourage crime. The modern 'more
humane' form of punishment is more subtle; rather than the branding iron or the red-hot pincers, 'it is the conviction itself that marks the offender with the unequivocally negative sign' (DP:9), and punishment is 'intended to correct, reclaim, 'cure'' (DP:10). Thus Foucault shows in another way how the target of power has changed from a direct aim at the body through pain to a more subtle and unspoken interaction, aimed at the modern 'soul'.

In making this striking contrast, Foucault wants to bring to our attention this distinctly modern soul, the most intimate and meaningful aspect of self, which he considers is the modern locus of domination. He describes two main ways that power has created this soul. The first acts directly upon the habits and behaviours of the physical body, through discipline: drills, surveillance, routines and regimes, carried out, for example, in public establishments such as prisons, schools, the army, and hospitals. The 'aim' that evolved here is to produce machine-like habits of obedience, regularity, docility, and orderliness, and an optimisation of the body's capabilities, so that it can efficiently serve the needs of industry and the modern state (see HS:139). The finishing, and perhaps most telling, touch in this disciplinary apparatus is surveillance, which Foucault illustrates through the archetypical Panopticon, the highly efficient prison in which inmates may or may not be constantly watched by unseen warders, thus inserting into consciousness a habit of self-policing - of constantly conducting oneself as though under the watchful eye of authority. In this way is created a docile population which watches and disciplines itself in the manner in which it has been drilled, fitting the requirements of industry and government.

Foucault was not, of course, the first to consider the effects of the gaze. Sartre had discussed the look which shames at some length in*Being and Nothingness*(Part 3, chapter one). Foucault, however, brings a new perspective. Sartre's subject reduced by the look of the other to an object status stripped of transcendence, is in a reciprocal relation with the other, in that the situation can

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14. Consistent with Foucault's views of the change in the mode of operation of power is Gorham's mention that the former view that children needed strong physical punishment was challenged by early Victorian writers, who suggested that gentleness and reason were more effective means of disciplining children (1982:77).

15. The Victorian girl was to be taught that she herself was responsible for her own actions, and that each action 'in its influence on your character will reach through the whole period of your existence' (advice book for girls, cited by Gorham, 1982:79). This is one instance of the Panopticon approach being employed in the disciplining of women to make them self-policing - that is, to reach their souls.

16. Feminists, too, mostly inspired by Lacan, have long discussed the effects of the objectifying male gaze (for example, Mulvey 1975; Irigaray 1987:144-151). Long before any of these, Du Bois had recognised the feeling of the black American of 'always looking at one's self through the eyes of [white] others' (W.E.B. Du Bois 1969 [1903], quoted in Iris Young 1992:192).
be reversed, the other becoming the object of the gaze. The defeat, in any case, is only momentary and he or she remains essentially the same (BN:344-5). What is more, this interaction occurs in a timeless and universal framework, applying to all human beings. By contrast, Foucault's modern subject is actually created within the specific historical relations of power. The object of the gaze is the object of an expressly modern disciplinary technique, having been drilled firstly in correct use of body, time and space, and then being coerced into behaving as though constantly under the eye of authority. This is not a reciprocal relation, but is one of domination; the situation cannot readily be reversed. Above all, the subject is created in the particular form required, as docile, not by the other but by an immense and historically specific apparatus of power.

Again, Foucault is androcentric in universalising from mainly male examples here, paying little attention to the particular application of this form of discipline, involving drills, regimes, and surveillance, to women. The requirements for women were not often the same as for men, probably not even in the workplace, but certainly not for those women whose work was to serve husbands and families in the home, and in the nineteenth century relatively few women were included in the kinds of public establishment that Foucault cites. The point, however, is that he has provided a new and fruitful approach to understanding how forms of docile or subjected subjectivities are created (and, of course, in time, girls and women were increasingly subjected to the institutional regimes of schools, workplaces and hospitals).

The second way that Foucault describes power as constructing the modern soul is through techniques of 'individuation' through which we come to identify ourselves as the particular beings that we are. Once again, observation is a strong element of these techniques. In the regime of prison and hospital, for instance, the

17. Foucault briefly discusses this problem later (see PK:217). Our knowledge of Victorian household regimes does suggest that equivalent practices occurred in the home. The gap has begun to be filled by feminist scholars, though, as Carol Smart says, 'we still have a long way to go before we can understand how gender differentiation operates in the spheres of discipline and punishment' (1992:12). One piece of evidence is that there was a proliferation of magazines and manuals of advice on the work of the modern mother, emphasising cleanliness, routine, consistency, and 'appropriate' manners, habits, and deportment, all of which must be conscientiously taught to daughters, who were expected to assist in the work of the house, and thus to begin to acquire these virtues, at a very early age. Sewing, 'both plain hand sewing and fancy needlework', an exercise in patience and meticulous dexterity, was seen to be an essential skill for girls (Gorham 1982:75).

18. Meanwhile, fine work by many writers such as Frigga Haug and Others (1987), Iris Marion Young (1990b), John Berger (1972), and Beauvoir herself, have shown how young girls and women continue to be disciplined through coercive bodily techniques and surveillance which seek to create 'feminine' habits of submission, appealingness (with its eerie reminder of Sartre's gaping hole waiting to be filled), and the desire to serve the other.
details of each individual are meticulously observed, recorded, and specified. Thus each soul is examined, and in the process the individual is created:

The individual is not to be conceived as a sort of elementary nucleus ... on which power comes to fasten or strike, and in doing so subdues or crushes individuals. In fact, it is already one of the prime effects of power that certain bodies, certain gestures, certain discourses, certain desires, come to be identified and constituted as individuals. The individual, that is, is not the vis-a-vis of power; it is, I believe, one of its prime effects (PK:98).

Included in this process of individuation is a way of speaking about the body, most particularly its sexual aspect, of examining its activities, habits and behaviours, which creates the individual as normal or abnormal (the homosexual, the pervert, the hysterical woman, the masturbating child). While the sciences of man, psychoanalysis, psychology, medicine, and anthropology, act as silent confessors and expert providers of knowledge, the individual uses this knowledge in self-judgment, and in self-creation, though identifying him- or herself in conformity to it. Through these new forms of knowledge has arisen a technique of creating a particular form of individual, an individual with a modern 'soul' which, as Foucault shows, is directly connected to sexuality: 'It is through sex - in fact an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality - that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility' (HS:155).

Another reason why power has fastened upon sex in the modern era and constructed it as a special form of knowledge is that: 'the political significance of the problem of sex is due to the fact that sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population' (PK:125). As already explained, modern forms of economic production and of social organisation meant that the body was the focus in the new disciplinary relations of power. Now Foucault explains exactly how power was brought to bear upon the body, through what he terms 'biopower'. This 'calculated management of life' (HS:140) is concerned with the linked issues of population and sexuality (such as breeding rates, eugenics, morality, and normality) and of health (such as public housing, town planning, water supply, and disease control). The articulation of family and sexuality provides a dual instrument capable of dealing with the problem of indiscipline and the problem of 'the accumulation of men' (PK:151), and so does the articulation of family and health. Through discourses, knowledges, and practices concerning sexuality and health, power gains access to individual bodies and to the body of the people, creating both individuals and populations in the form most suited to the needs of the dominant network.

It is perhaps worth repeating, here, that Foucault does not see this entire project or strategy of creating a particular kind of individual and a particular kind
of population as consciously planned by 'a sort of at once real and fictive subject'. Rather he sees the final 'grand strategy' as having developed from particular needs which did give rise to calculated tactics. For example, the disciplining of the working class was not planned and imposed by any individual or any group of individuals, but there was an urgent need on the part of middle-class employers for a settled, compliant workforce: 'So the objective existed and the strategy was developed, with an ever-growing coherence, but without it being necessary to attribute it to a subject' (PK:204-5). Furthermore, one should not imagine a concerted dominating force on one side, and dominated rabble on the other; rather, 'dispersed, heteromorphous, localised procedures are adapted, re-inforced, transformed ... all this being accompanied by numerous phenomena of inertia, displacement and resistance' (PK:142).

The modern social and biological sciences, which Foucault had criticised in The Order of Things, originated in the particular manoeuvres within the relations of power of their practitioners, but have become part of a coherent strategy of achieving discipline:

[The mechanisms of discipline] engender ... apparatuses of knowledge and a multiplicity of new domains of understanding. They are extraordinarily inventive participants in the order of these knowledge-producing apparatuses ... The code they come to define is not that of law but that of normalisation. ... It is human science which constitutes their domain, and clinical knowledge their jurisprudence (PK:106).

For Foucault, these modern forms of knowledge, the human sciences, created out of 'strategic necessities' (PK:206), are instruments of domination; it is within the limits of their truths that the modern subject is created, assesses itself, and is made compliant.

I will be discussing the way that this type of knowledge penetrates us and forms our 'souls' in greater detail in the next chapter. Meanwhile, Foucault has provided a new way of understanding what we are, a 'toolkit' which we can ourselves use to investigate and comprehend exactly how we have been created. Unlike humanist theories, this toolkit is able to encompass women and other groups excluded from the realm of the Same. Once we realise that the power that we have tolerated is in fact intolerable, in that it dominates us in our very being, we have the possibility of opposing it.
The Ethical Outcomes of Foucault's Antihumanism

A Critique of the repressive concept of power

In this section I want to consolidate my explanation of Foucault's concept of power by applying it to a specific context. I want to demonstrate its ethical ramifications by applying it in a close reading of a piece of work by a highly regarded feminist social theorist. I will show how, despite good intentions, the use of the familiar oppressive concept of power is linked to the assumptions and values of liberal-humanism which are based upon a philosophy of the Same, inevitably resulting in the negation of difference. This occurs, I argue, even when the author is an innovative thinker, is genuinely concerned about the plight of the 'oppressed' and makes great effort to understand what these oppressions are.

I want to take issue with one aspect of Iris Marion Young's article, 'Five faces of oppression'. I want to consider the effects that she believes oppression to have upon people. Young defines oppression as 'the inhibition of a group through a vast network of everyday practices, attitudes, assumptions, behaviours, and institutional rules' (1992:180). Earlier, she says that 'all oppressed people share some inhibition of their ability to develop and exercise their capacities and express their needs, thoughts, and feelings' (175, emphasis added) and later, that oppression 'refers to structural phenomena that immobilize or reduce a group' (177, emphasis added). This view that through the application of power people are not only rendered unable to express their desires, but are somehow arrested or stunted in the development of their capacities, is a negative view of power that is to be contrasted to Foucault's view of it as primarily creative.

In Foucaultian terms, to be free, I have said, is to have direct control over our own powers of acting, to apply our capacities to our own ends. Obviously, structural, economic, and cultural factors, and threatened or actual violence, have the effect of excluding people such as the poor, American Indians, women, blacks, gays, some ethnic groups, and the mentally or physically disabled from participation in many activities, and their voices from being heard. But, following Foucault I would be wary of saying, as does Young, that they are immobilized or reduced, in the sense of being arrested in the development of their capacities.19 Certainly, the field in which their capacities may be exercised is limited in particular ways, but it cannot be simply assumed that, for each of these groups, these ways are more inhibiting of development than the limits of some other more

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19. Except in the case of extreme violence, which cannot, especially in the United States, be dismissed as rare, but which Foucault considers to be a particular usage of power. In such extreme circumstances, it may be that people close their activity right down, to the point of insensibility or madness.
fortunate groups, such as academics. I would prefer to say that the development of capacities takes particular forms, according to the particular form of the limits. The danger, otherwise, is that the criteria of the Same is used in judging such others, that they are inevitably found wanting, and the choice offered them is either to join the Same or to remain excluded.

An important aspect of the limits upon what is possible for us to think and to do, as Diprose says, is our particular habitual relation to the world and to ourselves - that is, our embodied character or ethos (1994:18-19). For example, let us accept that woman's embodied character is such that she desires to use her capacities to please and serve man. In this understanding, it is not that woman is stunted or deformed (as Beauvoir claims), but that her capacities have been 'captured' and turned more or less permanently to the use of man. Far from being immobilized, woman is active, and in fact her capacity to serve and to please has been very well developed - in her domestic skills, her tact and charm, for example. There is no fundamental reason why these skills should not be considered to be a development of her capacities. The problem is, rather, that patriarchy, as 'an established set of asymmetrical power relations' acts continually upon her actions, and so her 'ability to control, direct or author [her] own life' is consistently removed (Patton 1989:269-70). Similarly, poverty can be considered a form of domination; it is 'action upon the actions of others', in that the capacity to work is captured and turned to the use and control of a small group, so that some citizens are poor and others unemployed. While I do not want to deny that poverty restricts the field of action, or that it is a social disgrace to be fought against, I do not want to say that poor people are immobilized - unable to act - or 'reduced' (if this means retarded or deformed). I do not deny that they may appear 'immobilized or reduced' to an outside observer. My argument is that we must avoid reaching conclusions that are based upon the point of view of the Same. We cannot ethically assume that we know the other, or what the other needs, without asking.

In those sections of her work that I have quoted, Young shows a hint of Beauvoir. In her suggestion that the oppressed are 'reduced' is a trace of a constituent subject deformed from its authentic state by oppression. The oppressed groups she identifies have been denied access to many of the material means that make many activities possible, but we cannot assume that they have

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20. It is important to note here that 'authoring one's own life' is less a matter of representing the self to the self than of acting oneself upon one's own actions. This involves intentionality but not the absolute intentionality of Sartre's cogito. Patton makes the crucial point that the primary concept of power is non-relational, it is the 'power to' act: 'The power of an individual or body to act in certain ways is logically independent of relations to others and empirically the precondition of any action upon other bodies. In this sense, 'power to' is conceptually prior to 'power over' (1989:270).
been unable to construct their lives creatively within their particular limits. Is there a difference between Young's attitude that 'marginals' are 'immobilized or reduced' and that of the colonist to the 'native' - that the native is rude and uncivilised? I am quite sure that many of Young's 'oppressed' groups have highly developed capacities that are unheard of in other more privileged circles. Similarly, can we be so sure that these 'natives' do not express their thoughts between themselves, and that, if they do not do so in public forums, this is not the result, for example, of being heard only if they conform to the norms of the Same?

Young's analysis contains traces of what she herself criticises as the 'cultural imperialism [which] consists in the universalization of one group's experience and culture and its establishment as the norm' (191). Her paper shows an orientation which seeks to bring the other into the scope of the Same. There is, for example, her use of the term 'marginals' to describe people she considers to be 'expelled from useful participation in social life' (186). Even if these 'marginals' were given 'a comfortable material life within institutions that respected their freedom and dignity,' she says, 'injustices of marginality would remain in the form of uselessness, boredom and lack of self-respect', because they would remain excluded from 'productive and recognized activities' (188). I have three problems with this. Firstly, Young takes usefulness, a value of the Same (and of Beauvoir), as given, without question, yet, in the case of the sexes, uselessness is defined as the activity of the other. In other words, in failing to challenge mainstream concepts, Young takes society to be rightfully homogeneous, and the values of the dominant group to be universal. Secondly, I wonder if the assumption that 'marginals' would remain incapable of organising satisfying activities for themselves if given the material means - that 'usefulness' must be organised for them - is not itself a diminution of them. Thirdly, she recognises that 'marginalization' is dangerous for the marginals (186), but her answer is to change them, not the attitudes of those who threaten them. Her answer is to preserve the Same by incorporating difference within the existing social fabric in the form of a pre-defined 'useful participation'.

In a similar vein, Young is doubtful that 'menial' labour (such occupations as builders' labourers and servants) can be more than 'servile, unskilled, low-paying work lacking in autonomy' (185). This she contrasts with professional work, which 'has an expansive, progressive character .... The life of the non-professional by comparison is powerless in the sense that it lacks this orientation to the progressive development of one's capacities' (189). While she, apparently, wants to eliminate the division of labour between mental and manual work, she leaves a

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21. This view is remarkably similar to Kant's view, noted above, that servants, women, etc. are not fit to vote because of their lack of independent will.
trace of the Same when she praises the 'expansive, progressive character' of professional practice. In seeing professional work as 'the progressive development of one's capacities' (189), Young betrays what I have typified as a Kantian belief in progress and perfectibility. She assumes that everyone would be the Same if they could, but overlooks the question that Foucault would ask: Are professionals, often limited by their 'symbols and concepts' (189), necessarily any more free than servants or builders' labourers?22

In criticising Young, I have wanted to show that the 'repressive' (oppressive, inhibited) concept of power is linked to the assumptions and values of liberal-humanism, most particularly in its opposition of identity to the other, with a resulting incapacity to include difference. Applying Foucault's positive concept of power to Young's paper would mean an important change of emphasis. The focus would be less upon the helpless 'victim' status of the dominated and more upon finding conditions under which they can speak for themselves. It would not be assumed that these people's capacities are 'under-developed' or that they are unable to speak or to act within to the possibilities open to them. What Foucault offers is not accusations of guilt over failed 'transcendence', as does Beauvoir, or the guilt-ridden 'sympathy' of liberal-humanism, but a widening of the field of choice, through an understanding of the nature of its boundaries. He certainly would not presume to tell people what the good life is, as does Young.

I have begun, in this section, to spell out how, in practical terms, difference is to be freed from the law of the Same. I have begun to show what ethical relation to others is implied by Foucault's understanding that human subjectivity is created fully in the world, within limits set not only by injustice and coercion but also by the boundaries within which our thought is confined. Before concluding this chapter, I want to discuss this aspect of Foucault's ethics more directly.

Ethics, difference and others

'Being', says Foucault, 'is the recurrence of difference' (1977b:192). From this understanding that there is no ultimate truth of human being, that there is no God and no human nature to have given us an essence, it follows that an ethical relation to others must take difference into account. Without the support of God or Man, and most pertinently without the justification provided by oppositional categories (Foucault 1977b:192), nothing can righteously or with assurance be expected of others' forms of subjectivity or of the manner in which they choose to conduct their lives. Since truth and subjectivity are contingent, such righteousness

22 In saying this, I do not mean that professionals do not have other advantages over others, or that they do not exploit others.
and assurance amount to an unjustified assumption that Foucault rejects, as he explains in a discussion of polemics:

The polemicist ... proceeds encased in privileges that he possesses in advance and will never agree to question. On principle, he possesses rights authorizing him to wage war and making that struggle a just undertaking; the person he confronts is not a partner in the search for truth, but an adversary, an enemy who is wrong, who is harmful and whose very existence constitutes a threat. For him, then, the game does not consist of recognizing this person as a subject having the right to speak, but of abolishing him, as interlocutor, from any possible dialogue; and his final objective will be, not to come as close as possible to a difficult truth, but to bring about the triumph of the just cause that he has been manifestly upholding from the beginning. The polemicist relies on a legitimacy that his adversary is by definition denied (1986a:382).

As Foucault says earlier, 'I insist on this difference as something essential: a whole morality is at stake, the morality that concerns the search for the truth and the relation to the other' (1986a:381). In other words, an ethical relation with others must be concerned with giving difference the legitimacy of speaking and of being heeded in the search for truth: 'The task of voicing the truth is an endless labour: to respect it in all its complexity is an obligation no power can afford to shortchange, unless it would impose the silence of slavery' (1989:308).

Foucault sees that to speak for others, and particularly to use his authority to do so - to tell us what we are, what we should be, or what we should do - denies our significance, our difference and our freedom to be and to act.23 He is constantly aware of the 'absolutely fundamental ... indignity of speaking for others' (1977b:209). Foucault does not presume to prescribe to us, as does Beauvoir. Rather, he gives us choice; having shown how forms of power have acted upon us, finally, people are 'left to make up their own minds, to choose, in the light of this, their own existence' (1988a:50).

The upholding of difference does not mean, however, tolerance of the intolerable - for instance of the philosophy and politics of the Same that dominates our world. The work of an intellectual, Foucault says, is to unsettle what confines us: 'to re-examine evidence and assumptions, to shake up habitual ways of working and thinking, to dissipate conventional familiarities, to re-evaluate rules and institutions' (1989:305). But the work of the citizen is to engage in political debate and struggle (1989:306), at the same time treating others, and expecting to be treated by them, as a respected 'partner in the search

23. So Foucault does have some excuse for his often noted neglect of female examples, though Judith Still does point out one, Herculine Barbin, who 'As a fe/male subject of power ... is one useful counterpart to the Lapcourt farmhand' (1994:152). As the latter case and his discussion of rape show (see chapter four), he may well deserve criticism for insensitivity to the effects of power upon female bodies, but not for not speaking for women.
for truth'. This is a relation towards the other that is significantly different from the fundamental hostility posited by Hegel, and is perhaps the closest Foucault comes to laying down a moral code.

So, the ethical relation to others is closely bound up with Foucault's abiding concern for freedom. In one's relation with the other, it is important that one does not negligently join the accumulated systems of power which act so strongly upon the actions or potential actions of others. In our era, the system of power that is most potent in acting upon the 'life', activity, or force of human beings is that which is supported by the philosophy that we call humanism. As noted, this has 'crystallized' into a huge network of interlinking knowledges, institutions and organisations. Finally, Foucault links this to fascism:

And not only historical fascism, the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini ... but also the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us (1977:xiii).

By this, Foucault means not only the techniques of power of the modern state, with its concern to control the lives of the population through the technologies of 'bio-power', with their connections to eugenics and racism, but the positive embracing by individuals of this regime of power, so that it comes to form our ethos, our manner of being, and to constitute our everyday practice in our relations to our selves and to others.

This acceptance of the dominant understandings and assumptions of our time is not merely an abrogation of one's personal freedom, it is to employ the same nihilating actions upon the actions of others that are advanced by the logic of the Same. As Young pointed out, these forms of domination can be matters of life and death, and we cannot simply deny our complicity in them. Liberty, says Foucault, does not exist unless we exercise it:

The liberty of men is never assured by the institutions and laws that are intended to guarantee them. This is why almost all of these laws and institutions are quite capable of being turned around. Not because they are ambiguous, but simply because "liberty" is what must be exercised (1989:265).

**Conclusion**

In the modern era, says Foucault, through the action of power upon bodies, new boundaries have been set in what it is possible for the individual to be and to do, but: 'The irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our "liberation" is in the balance' (HS:159). Here Foucault is alluding not only to modern psychological theories of repression, but also to the fiction that the right of the
individual to sovereignty guarantees our freedom (PK:104-8). This occurs, he says, because 'power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of itself' (HS:86) - that is, we tolerate power because we are led to understand it as imposing some quite reasonable limits upon the freedom that we essentially possess. This sounds as though Foucault has reverted to the theory of ideology, but this is not so. Certainly Foucault thinks we are outmanoeuvred by this discourse of intrinsic individual freedom, but for him this is a strategy of domination which occurs within relations of power in which 'effects of truth are produced within discourses which in themselves are neither true nor false' (1986a:60). To counter this, what we must do is to strategically create another truth, a discourse that embraces greater prospects of freedom, and practices that gives us greater control over our form of subjectivity.

Earlier I cited Foucault's question: 'How much does it cost the subject to be able to tell the truth about itself?' I have argued that Foucault has provided a toolkit that can enable us to understand what we are and how we have been created, and I have suggested that this toolkit is capable of encompassing difference, including sexual difference. So, now we are in a position to decipher an answer to the question: What is the cost to the feminine subject of being able to tell the truth about herself? The Second Sex can be read as a litany of such costs, and subsequent feminist work has added to this knowledge. However, two problems remain in the way of women's effective use of this understanding to create new truths and greater freedom for themselves. The first concerns woman's impossible position as Other to man; the second concerns the question of her complicity in her own domination - one of the costs to the feminine subject of telling the truth about herself is the 'dream of submission' that Beauvoir points out (SS:728).

In chapter two, I discussed the way that woman is trapped as Other within the Hegelian dialectical schema of the creation of identity. I questioned whether Hegel's symbolic system was a sufficient explanation of the creation of subjectivity, and I asked whether it was not real political events we need to take into account, rather more than the symbolic. In the Hegelian schema, since the identity of both sexes depends upon woman's otherness to man, it is impossible for woman to become the Same and equally impossible for her to create an independent identity. In this context, Beauvoir's calls for reciprocity cannot but fall upon barren ground. The answer to such an impasse is to take heed of Heidegger's warning that when philosophy focuses upon its essence all it can do is 'to constantly think the Same' (epigraph chapter two) and to think differently, sidestepping the Hegelian entanglement.

Earlier in this chapter, in relation to Derrida's criticism, I explained how Foucault gives us an alternative theory of the formation of subjectivity through
his genealogical investigation of the effects of power. This deconstructs the *cogito* as the Subject and places the creation of subjectivity completely in the real, existing, historical world of acting, embodied, being, rather than in the transhistorical, disembodied world of a *cogito* which gives itself identity through symbols. The dialectic, Foucault says, 'can [not] account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts [and] is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing it to a Hegelian skeleton' (PK:114-5).

Diprose has criticised Foucault for 'a blindness to the role a relation to the other plays in the generation of identity and value' (1994:33). But what he is in fact doing in relation to identity is 'thinking differently' - sidestepping the violence of the philosophy of the Same - by turning instead to a theory in which subjects are created through the action of power upon bodies. As mentioned in the first part of this chapter, the understanding of subjectivity as formed within power relations that exist in the time of culture eliminates categorical thought and opens the possibility of differences existing in their own right, without reference to the Same.

By thus rejecting the abstract theory of the dialectical struggle in which self creates itself through violently negating the other, Foucault allows the possibility of the other, of difference, being recognised and upheld rather than nihilated. For him there are no two transparently aware founding subjects facing each other in combat, and it is no longer an elemental matter of either conquering or of being vanquished. Subjects are created within power relations, and it is the way that this occurs that is of interest to feminists. Patriarchal power relations mean that the codes and possibilities for the formation of discourses and practices have been captured, that they have been 'authored' from a masculinist perspective. The recognition that domination takes this form of capture opens the possibility of reappropriation. The questions that need to be asked then address the masculinist discourses, bypassing the dialectical bind:

What are the modes of existence of this discourse? Where has it been used, how can it circulate, and who can appropriate it for himself? What are the places in it where there is room for possible subjects? Who can assume these various subject functions? (Foucault 1986a:120).

Again, as far as values are concerned, should not feminist theory also sidestep this system of valuing *versus* the Other that has been so depreciatory of woman? Can merit also exist in its own right, rather than being captured within an opposition that has been set up to glorify the One? It is worth recalling again Heidegger's saying that, '[Valuing] does not let things: be. Rather, valuing lets beings: be valid - solely as the objects of its doing' (1977:228).
Feminist objections to Foucault on the grounds that he ignores women's need for identity remain within the dialectical thinking and the logic of identity that have been so detrimental to the feminine. Of course Foucault recognises that identity is symbolically constituted in relation to the different, that identity can only be seen in contrast to differences. What he denies is the essential place given to this. As he says:

> it is not enough to say that the subject is constituted in a symbolic system. It is not just in the play of symbols that the subject is constituted. It is constituted in real practices - historically analyzable practices. There is a technology of the constitution of the self that cuts across symbolic systems while using them (1986a:369).

This, however, does not mean that we can look forward to a utopian Foucaultian future where, once difference is recognised, no opposition and no violence will occur, and domination is permanently abolished. Rather, in his conception of power, struggle is constantly necessary, for 'everything is dangerous' (1986a:343). In the simplified language of moving bodies that I evoked earlier from Spinoza, power is the movement of life, and moving bodies continually collide, enhancing or diminishing their activity in the process. This is a way of comprehending what Foucault means when he speaks of 'permanent provocation':

> Rather than speaking of an essential freedom, it would be better to speak of an "agonism" - of a relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyses both sides than a permanent provocation (1986b:222).

Liberation, then, is not necessarily a question of an absolute freedom from its opposite, slavery or domination, and it is not, as for Sartre and Beauvoir, an either/or matter of controlling or being controlled by others; it is better to think in terms of reciprocal struggle and degrees of freedom. So, we can say that Western women today are relatively free from external domination, no longer forced by law or economic necessity to obey the dictates of a patriarchal order. The legal and economic relations of power between men and women are no longer 'firmly set or congealed' and more-or-less reciprocal struggle often occurs. Many inequities remain and the external constraint of violence still exists, and must be confronted, but for many women the significant constraint is not so much external as internal.

This returns us to the second problem that stands in the way of women putting to full use their newfound understanding of the way that power creates them. As Beauvoir has so graphically described, all too often women are beings whose desire is such that they cooperate in their own submission to patriarchal domination. Speaking more generally, Foucault has given us knowledge of how we are formed as subjects and of what it is that we must resist if we value our
freedom and safety. He has explained how modern subjects are shaped to be self-policing and docile, but this seems to leave us trapped as that particular kind of subject. This knowledge encourages and strengthens the resolve to resist, but it does not help us to know what to aim for in a positive sense. 'Freedom' as absence from coercion is a negative concept that does not tell us how to act; we need to know how we want to put our liberty into practice. How, for example, are women to deal with their desire to submit? Since total refusal is clearly not the answer, we need positive principles on which to base our conduct.

Western women may be considerably less externally dominated than in earlier times, but the question of the internal relation of power remains to be considered - that is, are we 'self-dominated'? How are we to become subjects over our selves, rather than subject to our selves? How are we to constitute ourselves as free subjects? Foucault has offered tools for understanding how we have become what we are, but how are we to change, to 'free [our] thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently', and how are we to become authors of our own conduct? (Foucault UP:9). In the next chapter, I show how Foucault has also offered tools that we can use towards understanding and resolving this problem.
Thinking Differently: Subjection and How to Get Free of Oneself

It was curiosity ... not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself.

Foucault, UP:8

A woman will always sacrifice herself if you give her the opportunity. It is her favourite form of self-indulgence.

W. Somerset Maugham, The Circle

In proposing an aesthetic approach to ethics, Foucault is suggesting that we can intentionally shape our actions upon ourselves and upon others according to principles that we have chosen as pleasing. In other words, he is suggesting how we can become authors of our own conduct. This involves a particular relationship to the codes of conduct that exist in our culture, a degree of detachment, so that one is not inevitably an agent acting in accordance with others’ directions, but is striving toward being the ethical subject of one’s own actions. It also involves having a particular relation to self, an effort to regard oneself as an object of thought and of one’s own actions, a belief that it is possible to act upon one’s own actions, to shape oneself according to chosen criteria.

Generally, feminists have rejected this aspect of Foucault’s work - in fact, en masse would scarcely be too strong a description of the response. Some fear that we are being encouraged to become self-absorbed and shallow fops or dandies, individualistically engrossed in our own immediate pleasures, frivolous and unmindful of others' suffering. Jean Grimshaw for example speaks of 'an aesthetic approach ... based on the exquisite and somewhat solipsistic fashioning of a regimen for an individual life'(1993:68; see also McNay 1992a:163-65; Yeatman 1990:293). Others, in varying ways, say that the
aesthetic approach is unable to encompass women's difference (see for example Diprose 1994:29, 31, 33; Braidotti 1991:91, 95; Grosz 1994:156). While the reasons for these rejections vary from shocked reaction to more reflective considerations of sexual difference, I believe that the best approach to them is careful consideration of what Foucault actually said about the aesthetic approach to ethics, followed by inquiry, through the criticisms, into what this might mean in terms of women’s difference.

Foucault’s earlier work, on the other hand, is generally viewed positively by feminists. His work on power is often seen to be very useful in showing how women have been constituted within power relations, and special praise has been reserved for his attention to the body (see for example Diprose 1994:20, 27-8, 75; Braidotti 1991:88-9; Bordo 1989; Grimshaw 1993:61). Tending to confirm this feminist division of Foucault into the useful and the useless, some scholars have asserted that there are deep discontinuities in his work, claiming most particularly a complete change of direction following the first volume of The History of Sexuality. The Habermasian Thomas McCarthy, for example, complains that Foucault tries to escape this charge by employing 'redescriptions' of his earlier work which are presented as 'accurate accounts of what he was "really" up to at the time' (1991:221, N.29). However, my considered view is that Foucault’s thought follows a consistent theme and that this seeming change of direction is more accurately and helpfully thought of as part of a developing project, as I mean to show in the following discussion.

For Foucault, it has been the silencing of unreason that has been the great code, or ‘positive unconscious’ of modern knowledge, from which were formed the normalising discourses which have so strongly contributed to the shaping of the modern subject and, I argue, to the particular form of modern woman as Other. The incarceration of unreason in modernity was ‘the moment at which the great confrontation between Reason and Unreason ceased to be waged in the dimension of freedom, and in which reason ceased to be for man an ethic and became a nature’ (Foucault 1976:87). This theme, the ‘reduction of reason to nature’ (Bernauer 1988:45) and of unreason to alienated nature, first investigated by Foucault early in his career (in Mental Illness and Psychology and in Madness and Civilization), sums up exactly what he was still doing in his final works: attempting to restore ‘the general relation that Western man established between himself and himself close on two hundred years ago’ to the dimension of freedom, to make it an ethic (Foucault 1976:87).

So, this chapter is devoted to explicating Foucault’s aesthetic approach to ethics, and to linking this part of his work to the earlier. In the first section, I briefly review aspects of his philosophical objectives and orientation to provide an introduction to the question of the subject’s relation to itself. In the second, I
discuss the relation of power between self and self and Foucault’s suggestions for how to get free of oneself. In the third, I explain why Foucault considers the relation to the self to be the primary ethical relation. While I note some of the feminist objections mentioned above as they become relevant, I address them more fully in the promised inquiry into whether the aesthetic approach to ethics is appropriate or realisable for women in their difference, in the fourth section of the chapter.

Philosophical Considerations

The subject

Foucault’s final work is concerned with the question: ‘How are we constituted as moral subjects of our own actions?’ (1986a:49). Of course we know that for him the thinking ‘I’ as subject cannot be taken for granted as it is for Sartre for whom man has prior subjectivity and specific attributes which determine what is truly moral for him. Foucault objects to this ‘laying everything at the door of individual responsibility’, a view lacking complexity which he calls ‘the existentialism of self-flagellation’ (PK:189). It is ironic that Sartre determines what the Subject is and what is truly moral for him when his aim is supposed to be absolute human freedom, while Foucault assumes as little as possible concerning the subject or human morality, and is accused of denying agency! From the Foucaultian point of view, in mistakenly assuming a freedom which it does not have, Sartre’s subject actually makes itself less free: unable to comprehend the conditions of its own constitution, it cannot choose to change these. Foucault’s painfully elaborated subject, with a grasp of its own contingency, is far more free to unravel the conditions of its being and to refuse them and, finally, to make choices about its own manner of being.

Garth Gillan puts the difference between Sartre’s and Foucault’s understanding of the subject clearly:

For Foucault ... the subject is not accessible through a description of lived experiences in which consciousness is face to face with itself and truth is marked by the clarity of

1. An assessment that applies tellingly to Beauvoir’s appraisal of woman in The Second Sex.

2. Compared with the radical freedom of the Sartrean consciousness/subject, or with modern liberal notions of individual autonomy, the liberty of Foucault’s subject appears to some critics to be unacceptably diminished (see for example Alcoff:1988, Hartsock 1990:167; Deveaux 1994:233; McNay 1992b:3; Taylor 1986:94-5). In my view, such critics are right only if belief in a fictional freedom constitutes liberty.
presence. The subject is only accessible obliquely, not in the continuity of its self-
consciousness, but in the discontinuity of its shifting forms, in the different
interrogations to which it is submitted, and in the ways in which its interiority is

Where for Sartre the *cogito* /subject directly communicates with itself and has
direct access to Truth, Foucault’s subject is ‘hollowed out’ through the myriad
actions of power upon it and can only come to a degree of self-understanding
through arduous processes of investigation of the historical truths within which it
has been fashioned. Through his historical investigations, Foucault has shown
how modern forms of rationality forged within relations of power have shaped
modern subjects. Now he wants to investigate how today’s subjects constitute
themselves as moral subjects of their own actions, and how earlier subjects have
used different forms of rationality to do this.

**Foucault’s consistent objectives**

Modern systems of thought, Foucault argues, are based upon a notion of man as
the arbiter and knower of truth, the central force in controlling, applying and
practising the truths of a world that he progressively commands. For Foucault
this view is a severe limit upon our freedom. As he says:

> It has seemed to me that the work of an intellectual ... is to try to isolate, in their power
> of constraint but also in the contingency of their historical formation, the systems of
> thought that have now become familiar to us, that appear evident to us, and that have
> become part of our perceptions, attitudes and behaviour (1989:282).

Foucault’s life’s work consisted of investigations of various aspects of this
problem of our confinement. Contrary to what is often argued, his aims were
coherent (see Bernauer 1988:45; Guttin:271). In 1983, he was still asking,
‘*What* is this Reason that we use? What are its historical effects? What are its
limits, and what are its dangers?’ (1989:268). As he points out at the end of his
life, ‘I have said nothing other than what I was already saying .... How is it that
thought, insofar as it has a relationship with the truth, can also have a history?’
(1989:294). I argue, and wish to emphasise, that this consistent aim is a key to
understanding Foucault, and is the context within which his last work is to be
most fruitfully understood. As he says:

> One has perhaps changed perspectives, one has turned the problem around, but it’s
> always the same problem: that is, the relations between the subject, the truth and the
> constitution of experience. I have sought to analyze how fields like madness, sexuality
> and delinquency could enter into a certain play of the truth, and how on the other hand,
> through this insertion of human practice and behaviour into the play of truth, the subject
> himself is effected (1989:310).
In particular, Foucault continues to say that human beings are ‘strategically specified’ as particular historical beings within particular regimes of truth (Morris:33).

Foucault himself says of his final works that he had come to realise that his earlier work, up to and including *Discipline and Punish*, had taken into account the problem of truth and the problem of power, and the relation between them, but he had not considered their relation to individual conduct. With his studies of sexuality, he began to consider the relation between subjectivity, truth, and the way that experience is constituted for the subject him- or herself (see 1989:318 and 296). Put in terms of power, he had looked at the action of other bodies upon the body of the subject, but he had not considered the internal relation, that is the subject’s own action upon his or her own actions. So, his final work is a continuation of his concern with the relation between truth, power and freedom, but the focus here is upon the internal link between truth and reflexivity: between the knowledge I use in making sense of my experience and choosing my actions, between what I understand myself to be and how, as a consequence, I ‘speak to’ myself. It is to this second relationship of power, of how the self operates upon the self, that Foucault refers when he speaks of getting ‘free of oneself’.

Finally, in this section, an opening word on sexual difference, the source from which arise the more relevant challenges to Foucault’s thought. On the face of it, Foucault’s view of sexual difference is not markedly different from Beauvoir’s stated belief that meaning is socially, not naturally, given. However, in Foucault’s case, recognition that sexuality is constructed and not natural does not mean that he does not recognise the reality of the difference that exists. The fact that we accept that gender difference is created strategically in contests of power does not mean that the structures of gender can simply be brushed aside. Unlike the Beauvoir of *The Second Sex*, Foucault would agree with Butler’s warning that constructivism does not mean that one is simply free to change: ‘A construction is, after all, not the same as an artifice’ (Butler 1993:94). Further, when Foucault speaks of changing our selves, he means changing, firstly, our relation to self and, secondly, the economy within which we make ourselves - from an economy of sex to one of ‘bodies and pleasures’. That is, his emphasis is more upon changing our relation to our desires, and less upon changing our desires themselves. As I showed in chapter three, his whole philosophy is concerned with restoring difference (or ‘unreason’) to ‘the univocity of being’, to liberate it from its alienation. I will return to this issue of difference.
Politics: The Relation of Power between Self and Self

The use of the library: The making of the subject

In his essay, ‘Fantasia of the Library’, Foucault says that Flaubert’s *The Temptation of Saint Anthony* ‘stands behind’, or recurs in all of his other books (1977b:87-8). Somewhat similarly, I want to point to this motif of ‘the library’ as ‘standing behind’ Foucault’s understanding of subjectivity, in a playful, retrospective reading. Later, I also want to use the metaphor of the library to illuminate what Foucault means by the relation to the self. The following passage from ‘Fantasia of the Library’ encapsulates what I want to develop:

The imaginary is not formed in opposition to reality as its denial or compensation; it grows among signs, from book to book, in the interstice of repetitions and commentaries; it is born and takes shape in the interval between books. It is a phenomenon of the library .... As a work, *The Temptation* ... relies on its location within the domain of knowledge: it exists by virtue of its essential relationship to books. ... it opens a literary space wholly dependent upon the network formed by books of the past (Foucault 1977b[1967]:91).

In this passage, we can read Foucault as telling us a great deal more than that meaning is constituted within the social ‘library’ of codes, discourses and practices. The passage provides metaphorical explanation of Foucault’s understanding of the role played by truth in the formation of the self, in opposition to psychoanalytic understandings of this process. Importantly, it disagrees with Lacan’s view of the Imaginary as belonging to a different essential order from the Real. According to Lacanian theory, the ego of the infant is formed through identification with a counterpart, an imaginary ‘other me’, usually its mother, as Elizabeth Grosz explains:

The child identifies with an image that is manifestly different from itself, though it also clearly resembles it in some respects. It takes as its own an image which is another, an image which remains out of the ego’s control. The subject, in other words, recognizes itself at the moment it loses itself in/as the other (1990:41).

Foucault thinks, differently, that the self is not made primarily through such universal imaginary relations with the mother, ‘in opposition to reality’, but through the effects upon the body of truths and practices that are historically

3. When Foucault wrote ‘Fantasia’, he had not brought power into his account. My aim is to explain his developed thought rather than to be faithful to its sequential evolution.

4. It should not be assumed that use of the library is voluntary; rather the metaphor refers to the limit set by the content of the library.
located. For him, the self is not predominantly formed through the identical fantasies of individual consciousneses, but through incorporation of the social outcomes of a particular historical rationality - the beliefs, knowledge, customs and practices which compose the ‘library’, and which are produced through relations of power.5 So, for Foucault, self-formation occurs in the wider world of this ‘library’, and is not essentially restricted to the family and to sexual relationships, as in psychoanalysis.6 We become quite similar subjects because the materials of the library are to a large extent the same.

It is to be noted particularly that this metaphoric ‘library’ is not representational but is in fact the real world that is presented to, and acts upon, the subject, the entire world of codes, behaviours, habits, customs and practices which include, but do not privilege, spoken and written materials. In other words, truths are not representations of some inaccessible ‘real’ truth, they are real truths - the nature of truth is that it is constructed. These materials of the ‘library’ have been produced as ‘strategic interventions’ in the shaping of embodied subjects and populations: ‘The history which bears and determines us has the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning’ (PK:114). As explained in chapter three, these gain access to the ‘soul’ through the body, and it is a mistake, I believe, to assume that this is a body that excludes the cognitive. To understand Foucault well, it is vital to grasp that for him thought is not to be seen as an activity opposed to the body, rather it is an activity of the body, and a very important one to freedom.

Failure to bear in mind that mind and body are one, and that therefore the movement of these, thought and action, are not to be regarded as opposed, seems to me to be the cause of some feminist criticism. Diprose, for example, seems to think that in his aesthetics of self Foucault is suggesting creating new modes of subjectivity through ‘asserting mind over matter’ (1994:29). To support this she quotes him ‘against himself’: ‘power relations can penetrate the body in depth, without depending even on the mediation of the subject’s own representations. If power takes a hold on the body, this isn’t through its having first to be interiorised in people’s consciousness’ (Foucault PK:186). Diprose speaks as

5. This is not the reflective and intentional process that Sartre posits. Rather, it should be thought of in terms of power, of actions upon actions. It must not, however, be assumed from this that Foucault rules out all possibility of reflectivity and intentionality.

6. Foucault does not deny, nevertheless, that the world of the modern child, in many cases, has been substantially restricted to the family, and that it has been from this available material that the modern child/subject must form itself. Furthermore, the modern truths of psychoanalysis and popular psychology with the crucial importance they give to the parent-child relationship form a very important part of the archive. But the point is to historicise rather than to essentialise the form of the subject, and thus to open the possibility of change.
though embodied being remains *always* outside of cognitive activity and conscious control, but Foucault has not said this. As I have said, thought is an activity of the body, and, for him, it is through thought that we can free ourselves. What Diprose overlooks is his belief that becoming conscious of the power that has taken a hold on our bodies opens the opportunity to work upon it and to change our relation to it.  

The state, the subject, and the relation to self

In our era, the archive is dominated by material produced by, and within the particular rationalities of, that generalised entity, “the state”, which Foucault describes in the following way:

I don’t think that we should consider the “modern state” as an entity which was developed above individuals, ignoring what they are and even their very existence, but on the contrary as a very sophisticated structure, in which individuals can be integrated, under one condition: that this individuality would be shaped in a new form, and submitted to a set of very specific patterns (1986b:214).

This ‘very sophisticated structure’ employs a form of power which:

applies itself to immediate everyday life, which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects ... a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to (1986b:212).

Foucault sees the state, dominated by the bourgeoisie and assisted by the experts of the social and human sciences, as exerting a new technology of power, ‘pastoral power’, which has its origin in Christian practices which were concerned with the salvation of individuals. As ‘a new form of pastoral power’, the state has been concerned with ensuring salvation not in the next, but in this world, and its aims have become the “worldly” well-being of populations and individuals (1986b:215). In place of the confessional ritual of priests, involving self-examination for sin, confession and absolution, an increasing number and variety of officials, professions and institutions have taken over the role of ‘confessor’, implementing new forms of self-scrutiny, and the replacement of sin by one’s sexual secrets. It is through this new technology, ‘pastoral power’, that

7. Interestingly, this raises the possibility of changing one's self through body work.

8. Foucault sees the intense focus on sexuality as beginning with the concern of the bourgeoisie to promote their own 'differential value'. Thus it began as a middle class 'affirmation of self' and only later came to be applied to the working classes (HS:123, see also 126).
people have come to learn that ‘the secret of their truth lies in the region of their sex’ (Foucault PK:214).

The priests of old were experts in sin; now new scientific experts produced true discourses on sex:

sexuality was defined as being “by nature”: a domain susceptible to pathological processes, and hence one calling for therapeutic or normalizing interventions; a field of meanings to decipher; the site of processes concealed by specific mechanisms; a focus of indefinite causal relations; and an obscure speech that had to be ferreted out and listened to (HS:68).

So, the experts insert a new set of truths and practices into the ‘library’ and in doing so they produce something that goes even deeper than the docility, orderliness, or proper behaviour produced by disciplinary and normalising techniques. They produce a particular way of understanding and relating to the self that consists of confessing to the self - to the expert within.

In ‘The Dangerous Individual’, Foucault gives an example of the change in the concept of self. He explains how, in the nineteenth century, the courts, under the influence of psychiatry, began to take an interest in the inner self of the criminal, looking for motives and explanations for crime, rather than at the crime itself, in order to pass just sentence. As a branch of medicine, psychiatry acts as a kind of ‘public hygiene’, responding to ‘the dangers inherent in the social body’ (1988a:134). This, again, is more than a process of ‘normalisation’ through the pathologisation of the other as a ‘dangerous individual’: today, a self-analysis by the accused is considered crucial to his or her defence (1988a:125-6). It is through such practices that individuals learn ‘naturally’ to look within for a cathartic truth, and this type of relation to the self is established and entrenched.

Despite its subversive aspects, psychoanalysis was also a major force in producing the modern subject and its way of relating to self, through defining the content of the psyche and its use of the confessional mode. As Deleuze and

9. In showing that the unconscious was outside the purview of conscious reason but was nevertheless to be taken seriously, Freud was ‘the first to undertake the radical erasure between ... the normal and the pathological, the comprehensible and the incommunicable, the significant and the insignificant’ (OT:361). Psychoanalysis also directly confronts the unspoken of the human sciences, the dubious foundations they depend upon and cannot admit to investigation, and thus shows them up to be non-sciences (OT:373-8).

10. The problem began, as Foucault sees it, when Freud, shying away from the modern form of power that sought to control populations and from its result, racism, reverted to the old juridical order of power - that of alliance, marriage and kinship, and the ‘Sovereign-Father’ (HS:150). The result of this ‘retro-version’ was, unfortunately, not a subversive influence, but the firm incorporation of sexuality into the jurisdiction of the family, and ‘the guarantee that one would find the parents-children relationship at the root of everyone's
Guattari have put it: ‘The great discovery of psychoanalysis was that of the production of desire, of the productions of the unconscious. But once Oedipus entered the picture, this discovery was soon buried beneath a new brand of idealism’ (1977:24). Referring facetiously to the Oedipal relation as the ‘daddy-mommy-me triangle’ (1977:51), Deleuze and Guattari note that Foucault described:

a development that affected the whole of bourgeois society in the nineteenth century: the family was entrusted with functions that became the measuring rod of the responsibility of its members and their possible guilt. Insofar as psychoanalysis cloaks insanity in the mantle of a “parental complex,” and regards the patterns of self-punishment resulting from Oedipus as a confession of guilt, its theories are not at all radical or innovative (1977:50).

Thus, far from being a liberating form of knowledge, psychoanalysis authorised the new invention of sexuality.

Foucault believes that sexuality, as ‘what is most material and most vital’ in our bodies, has been at the absolute centre of the great modern technologies of power, and consequently the modern forms of masculinity and femininity are the creations of these historically specific manoeuvres (HS:152; see also 103). 11 In terms of the ‘library’, we are subjected through this deployment of desire, having learned to relate to ourselves in this inward-looking way and to find there what the experts have put into the archive: ‘that austere monarchy of sex, so that we become dedicated to the endless task of forcing its secret, of exacting the truest of confessions from its shadow’ (HS:159). As Foucault says:

It is through sex - in fact an imaginary point determined by the deployment of sexuality - that each individual has to pass in order to have access to his own intelligibility (seeing that it is both the hidden aspect and the generative principle of meaning), to the whole of his body (since it is a real and threatened part of it, while symbolically constituting the whole), to his identity (since it joins the force of a drive to the singularity of history. ... Hence the importance we ascribe to it, the reverential fear with which we surround it, the care we take to know it (HS:155-6, emphasis added).

sexuality’ (HS:113). Thus, ironically, in seeking to avoid the biopower of the modern state, Freud played into its hands. Obviously the reinstatement of the patriarchal figure was not helpful to women.

11. Brian Massumi mentions that strong pressures are exerted upon real men and women to conform to the 'stereotyped sets of object choices and life paths' that are designated by gender categories (1992:87). Foucault, however, sees that the issue concerns more than the social pressure to conform to gender 'stereotypes': he sees that the subject interprets itself to a large degree through the lens of sexuality. What is new is that sexuality has become the point of inquiry into the self and the foundation of a new relation to the self.
Thus, for both men and women, what has become of the deepest importance is not simply direct sexual activity but the full expression of the self as a properly sexed being - that is as fully masculine or feminine. While what is proper varies quite widely, by class and age for example, and while sexuality defined within phallic terms has been challenged, the point is that sexuality is at the centre of the relation to self. This ‘confessional’ practice, which looks to us so natural and given, is in fact subjectifying because it composes a passive relation of self toward self; rather than actively choosing a relationship to self that gives us control over our selves, we look within for truth and catharsis. Unfortunately, both the truths and the confessional practices have been constructed by our powerful opponents in the ‘games of truth’ (1988:2). Luckily, we can now understand that this ‘is obviously only one of the given possibilities of organizing a consciousness of self’ (Foucault 1989:330).

**Freedom and the relation to self**

Ironically, our subjection to desire, which has occurred in the name of liberation, takes the form of a particular relation to the self that leaves us unfree, unable to act ethically. The relation to the self is one of consciously discovering who we are, *as an end in itself*, from which we are supposed to feel some kind of release - a process akin to the ‘“decipherment-purification”’ of Christianity (UP:70). ‘From that moment on [of Christian asceticism], the self was no longer something to be made, but something to be renounced and purified’ (1986a:366). Now it is something to be found, a process in which the relation to the self and to the other remain unexamined, as a given. Foucault’s suggestion is that there can be a different relation to self, in which we seek to know what we are, not for its own sake but in order to become different. This knowing is not a matter of self-decipherment. Rather, not surprisingly, it is a matter of assiduous and attentive genealogy.

So, there are two strands to Foucault’s thought about the relation to self. Firstly, rather than accepting truth as transhistorical, we need to understand how, through what historical operations of power, we have come to be what we are. We must find out what we are not through subjecting ourselves to the experts’ truths, but through genealogical inquiry. Secondly, in finding out what we are our aim is to become different, something consciously chosen and striven towards. Ultimately, for Foucault, this work of thought, of disentangling of our selves from the ‘truths’ we have been given, gives us freedom. As he explains:

> Thought is not what inhabits a certain conduct and gives it meaning; rather, it is what allows one to step back from this way of acting or reacting, to present it to oneself as an object of thought and question it as to its meaning, its conditions, and its goals. Thought
is freedom in relation to what one does, the motion by which one detaches oneself from it, establishes it as an object, and reflects upon it as a problem (1986a:388).

This is a declaration that merits attentive consideration, for concentrated in it is a very significant aspect of Foucault’s thought. Not only can it be read as a critique of existentialism, with its emphasis upon meaning, and of some forms of deconstruction which also give priority to meaning, it also sets out the basis of the possibility of self-change. The objection to the intentionality of Sartre’s cogito is to its absolute, totalising nature. For Foucault, consciousness is not the Subject, sole author of all response to the world, but this does not mean that subjects cannot reflect and act intentionally.

**Overcoming subjection**

In the following quotation Foucault describes the manner in which the Greeks used writing as an aid in relating to and constituting the self. In doing so, he gives a very clear description of the difference between the inward-looking modern (subjected) subject and a more consciously chosen relation to the self, created through a more reflective and active use of the ‘library’ and through programs of training and exercise:

As personal as they were, the hypomnemata [notebooks] must nevertheless not be taken for intimate diaries or for those accounts of spiritual experience (temptations, struggles, falls, and victories) which can be found in later Christian literature. They do not constitute an “account of oneself”; their objective is not to bring the arcana conscientiae to light; the confession of which - be it oral or written - has a purifying value. The point is not to pursue the indescribable, not to reveal the hidden, not to say the non-said, but, on the contrary, to collect the already said, to reassemble that which one could hear or read, and to this end which is nothing less than the constitution of oneself (1986a:364-5).

It is understandable that Diprose considers Foucault to be ‘guilty of reclaiming self-presence in his aesthetics of the self’ (1994:77) when he speaks rather incautiously of constituting the self. ‘Self-presence’ is, of course, precisely that humanist notion of sovereign subjectivity and self-transparency that Foucault had argued so strongly against, as leading to our imprisonment in a system of individualisation, self-decipherment and self-blame. Foucault would disagree with Diprose’s understanding, from Derrida, that ‘[s]elf-representation is a necessary condition of the constitution of the self’, at least in the fundamental emphasis she gives it. As she says, if Foucault does make this mistake, ‘this is only as a result of forgetting his own, earlier account of how the embodied self is constituted by disciplinary power within hierarchical relations with others (1994:77). But Foucault does not forget. The self which interests him is precisely an acting, embodied, being, that assemblage of actions that are so often shaped by the actions of others upon them. The affects of other bodies upon our own
occur as desires, emotions and images and influence our actions unless we are able to bring thought to bear upon them.

It is helpful here to link Foucault’s thought with Spinoza’s. For Spinoza, positive action is good, passive reaction (‘passion’) is bad. Here is his explanation of how the quality of thought affects the quality of action:

By emotion (affectus) I understand the modifications of the body by which the power of action in the body is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time the ideas of these modifications. Thus if we can be adequate cause of these modifications, then by emotion I understand an Action (actio), if otherwise Passion (passio) (Spinoza, Ethics, III, Definitions, 3).

Our mind acts certain things and suffers others: namely, in so far as it has adequate ideas, thus far it necessarily acts certain things, and in so far as it has inadequate ideas, thus far it necessarily suffers certain things (Ethics, III, Prop. 1).

For our purposes, we can say an idea is adequate when we have a clear idea of what we are and of what the bodies are that affect us, rather than a confused image that does not distinguish between the actions of other bodies and the affects they have upon our own.

Foucault is suggesting that, just as others can act upon our actions, so can we ourselves, through having adequate understanding of these processes. The hypomnemata were not direct or transparent accounts of the self, or psychological insights, but materials collected as a guide to what conduct one might aspire to, and to assist in training oneself to act in the chosen way. The writing of the hypomnemata does not constitute the self in relation to the other (see Diprose 1994:76), but assists in changing the relation to self from passive to active. We do this, in terms similar to Spinoza’s, through the development of our thought and understanding. So, Foucault is not returning to the concept of consciousness as translucently aware of all that occurs, nor, as I have said, to the notion of consciousness as an absolute independent intentionality.

This has resonances with the Sartrean emphasis on the ethicality of making an active choice. However, for Sartre and Beauvoir, this is a choice that must be ‘authentic’, that ‘turns back to the idea that we have to be ourselves - to be truly our true self’ (Foucault 1986a:351). Further, this is an imperative that repudiates the body and its emotions, and tells women to model themselves upon masculine ideals - hardly an autonomous choice! By contrast, Foucault suggests that we may be able to free ourselves of the economy of inner truth that at present subjects us, by creating ourselves as the kinds of acting being we wish to be, that is ‘as moral subjects of our own actions’. Thus, Foucault’s suggestion for an ethics, far from being a moral imperative, is that we consider freeing ourselves through creating ourselves, laboriously and perseveringly, as ‘works of art’.
In the following passage Bernauer acutely sums up Foucault’s radical difference from Sartre and Beauvoir:

For him, the formation of oneself as a thinker and a moral agent, which develops only through historical struggles, must be understood as the creation of a work of art rather than the execution of a program. The energy of that work of art is ... a transcendence of man and self that culminates not in a Nietzschean Superman but in the recognition that in leaving God and man behind, we do not stand in need of a substitute for them (Bernauer 1990:183).

But at this point, the question of sexual difference arises. As noted, Foucault was generally not heedful enough of sexual difference in his work, and feminists often doubt whether his findings can actually apply to the different bodies and identities of women. As Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out, the same operation of power upon a male or a female body will have a different effect (1994:156), something that Foucault does not consider in any depth. The question is whether his ideas on making the self as a work of art can apply to women or only to the privileged Greek male.

My answer to this, at this stage, is that Foucault’s failure to recognise sexual difference is not reason to abandon his thought on the effects of power on bodies, including the relation to self. Rather it is reason for women to construct their own genealogies, keeping in mind that the problem for modern subjects is, firstly, how we have come to accept the particular categories of our era (gendered as they undoubtedly are), and, secondly, how we could think and perceive differently, so as to get free of the internalised self. In the context of a philosophy that positively embraces difference, as Foucault’s does, the question of originary difference between the sexes melts away: difference is implicit. While the particular techniques of power and their effects do indeed differ between the sexes and require particular investigation, what Foucault is assuming is that the form of rationality underlying the operations of power that produce the modern hermeneutical subject does not differ significantly. It seems entirely reasonable to accept that this rationality (humanism), which of course is conceptualised through masculine parameters, has been applied to both men and women, albeit in gendered ways; although men and women do not inhabit the same bodies, they do not inhabit entirely different worlds. Nevertheless, this answer, too, is tentative and I will return again in the next chapter to the

12. In the context of a philosophy that negates difference, Beauvoir's claim that gender is socially imposed leads her to a solution that discriminates unfairly. The bodily difference of the sexes is decidedly relevant in dealing with this philosophy of the Same. Foucault, however, goes beyond this. His androcentrism, noted earlier, is at the level of particularity. My claim is that his 'toolkit' is neutral and allows women to investigate their own genealogies.
question: Is sexual difference irreducible, and does it matter in the context of Foucault’s ethics of the self?

**Ethics and the self: The deliberate form assumed by liberty**

In setting out to do a genealogy of the desiring subject, Foucault wanted to show that our own relation to self is contingent, that there are other ways of being. In doing so, he found that the Greek problematisation of ethics had some features that resonate with our present concerns. Further, he thought that some of their ideas and practices were worth thinking about when it comes to considering our own ethical style.

Today we can no longer found a morality in human nature or in religion, since both are in question, and, as Foucault has shown, there is good reason to question the conventional disciplinary codes. There is, therefore, need for an ethics that is not religious or legal or tied to ‘so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is’ (Foucault 1986a:343). The Greeks, Foucault says, had an outlook that was similar, in that they too did not look to the gods or to legal institutions for ethical principles but rather to themselves. Foucault believes, therefore, that we can perhaps find ideas and practices in the Greek notion of ethics that can assist us in considering how we might practice our liberty. In saying this, he is not suggesting the Greek culture as a better model for us to imitate:

The Greek ethics of pleasure is linked to a virile society, to dissymmetry, exclusion of the other, an obsession with penetration, and a kind of threat of being dispossessed of your own energy, and so on. All that is quite disgusting! (1986a:346).

He is adamant, in any case, that we should not regard Greek life, or any other, as something desirable to return to: ‘there is no exemplary value in a period that is not our period’ (1986a:347). What he wants to do is to separate out those ideas which he sees as useful to our own dilemma and which do not depend essentially upon the invidious aspects of the Greek culture. The principal idea, of course, is the conception that one can actively and intentionally create one’s self and one’s life as ‘a work of art’. In other words, Foucault suggests that we consider fashioning our lives upon principles chosen upon the basis of ‘an aesthetics of existence’ of creating a beautiful life, as did the Greeks. This means having a relation to the self which ‘can be a very strong structure of existence’ (1986a:348), and yet is freely chosen, rather than imposed from outside the self in authoritarian, juridical style, or involuntarily through the modern operations of power. Foucault explains:
And what I mean by this is a way of life whose moral value did not depend either upon one’s being in conformity with a code of behaviour, or upon an effort of purification, but on certain formal principles in the use of pleasures, in the way one distributed them, in the limits one observed, in the hierarchy one respected (UP:89).

So, the ethical relation to the self, in which we seek to know what we can of ourselves in order to become different, is founded not upon adherence to external rules, but upon reflectively adopted principles. One’s rules of behaviour towards others are then fashioned to conform with these principles. The Greek instance is not the only example of such a relation to the self; in Christianity Foucault finds also, alongside rule-bound moralities, other moralities in which codes and rules ‘are relatively unimportant, at least compared with what is required of the individual in the relationship he has with himself, his different actions, thoughts, and feelings as he endeavors to form himself as an ethical subject’ (UP:30; see also Bernauer 1988:69). This is to be contrasted with the later Christian moral system where the relation to the self is based on:

finitude, the Fall and evil; ... obedience to a general law that is at the same time the will of a personal god; a type of work on oneself that implies a decipherment of the soul and a purificatory hermeneutics of the desires; and a mode of ethical fulfilment that tends towards self-renunciation (CS:239-40).

The former relation to the self, Foucault says, is a practice of liberty, whereas the second, from which our own developed, is not. In ancient Greece, ‘the will to be a moral subject ... was principally an effort to affirm one’s liberty and to give to one’s own life a certain form’ (1989:311). By contrast, in Christianity, morality tended to become ‘obedience to a system of rules’ rather than turning upon liberty (1989:311). There was, he says, ‘an inversion between the hierarchy of the two principles of antiquity, “Take care of yourself” and “Know thyself”’(1988b:22). In the later Christian tradition, self-scrutiny was necessary to ensure that one was following the externally given rules, and thus knowing yourself ‘became the fundamental principle’, whereas in Greece after Plato, taking care of the self meant producing oneself as virtuous, and knowledge of oneself was used to this end. It was this free application of principles to one’s life that made possible an ethical existence. In Greek ethics, it is ‘the kind of relationship you ought to have with yourself ... which determines how the individual is supposed to constitute himself as a moral subject of his own actions’ (1986a:352).

In the Greek system, both the reflectively adopted principles and the rules of behaviour subsequently fashioned in conformity to them were, of course, found in the cultural space of the ‘library’, not in some imaginary external space, or within the individual self, but ‘start[ed] of course from a certain number of rules, styles and conventions that are found in the culture’ (1989:313). This means that
the difference between care of the self and ‘rule-bound’ ethics is subtle but crucial: it is the difference between obeying a demand for unquestioning obedience to normative rules and a thoughtful adoption of rules that are suited to one’s own principles. The former mode of morality promises purification though obedience, the latter Foucault suggests is ethical, as I will now explain.

There is, for Foucault, an important difference between ‘a morality turned towards ethics and a morality turned towards a code’ (1989:311). The apparent similarity between Sartre and Foucault is instructive here. For both, ethics is intimately bound to freedom, but for Sartre, an ethical existence occurs when one accepts and acts upon the facts of existence - in effect, when one conforms to the rules. For Foucault, an ethical existence is deliberately fashioned through the practice of liberty, and apart from setting us free in this way, Foucault refuses to lay down any rules. In the modern era, for example, to practise an ethics it is necessary ‘to get free of oneself’ (UP:8) rather than to subject oneself to the ‘self-evident’ knowledges which constitute the modern experience of the self.

For Foucault, ‘Liberty is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty’ (1988:4). Here, Foucault elegantly achieves what Sartre set out but failed to do, to make us free. For Foucault, ‘man does not begin with liberty but with the limit’ (quoted by Bernauer 1988:64), and it is reflective thought that is the means to freedom: ‘Thought is freedom in relation to what one does’ (1986a:388). The work of liberation is to get free of the self that has been constituted by external forces and to practice instead an arduous ‘domination of oneself by oneself’, to base one’s actions upon freely selected criteria (UP:65). This difficult relation is an agonism in relation to oneself (UP:65-6). In Greece, the pleasures had to be combated because of ‘the danger that, winning out above all else, they would extend their rule over the whole individual, eventually reducing him to slavery’ (UP:66), not because concupiscence was evil in itself, a dangerous Other, ‘with is ruses and its powers of illusion ... one of the essential traits of the Christian ethics of the flesh’ (UP:68).

My argument so far has been that, since women have clearly been targets of the kinds of strategies of power that Foucault describes, there is good reason for them to consider positively the possibility of selecting for themselves the criteria

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13. A certain agreement with Kant, who considers freedom essential to moral being, appears here. However, freedom, for Foucault, is a far more relative matter than it is for Kant, or for Sartre.
upon which to base their actions, that is of becoming the ethical subjects of their own actions and authors of their own lives. I will discuss this in more detail in the conclusion to this chapter. First I must turn to the criticisms feminists have made of Foucault’s aesthetics of the self, to explore from their points of view whether this is really applicable to women in their difference.

### Feminist Objections

**Is ethical behaviour possible without normative rules?**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, some feminist critics find the notion of making ourselves ‘works of art’ alarming, many believing that prescriptive norms are necessary to ethical behaviour. Lois McNay, for example, wants Foucault to lay down ‘guidelines ... about what constitutes valid behaviour’ (1992a:172). The most obvious response to this is that such critics imply that prescriptive norms actually prevent abhorrent behaviour, yet the evidence is all around us that they do not, demonstrated for example by the fascism of this century. These critics may argue that behaviour would be even worse without such norms, but as Foucault has argued, normalisation is an operation of power and externally imposed norms merely fashion many of us into a suitable mould for exploitation by others. Far from protecting us from extremes of violence, these codes and rules promote it while appearing to prohibit it, endangering us. As Foucault says, ‘The search for a form of morality acceptable to everybody in the sense that everyone should submit to it, strikes me as catastrophic’ (1988a:254). He is in fact critical of the later Greeks for 'the profound error' of trying to make the 'style of existence' they were searching for 'common to everyone' (1989:319-20).

Foucault has explained why he does not want to lay down rules:

> So you see, there really is a call for prophetism. I think we have to get rid of that. People have to build their own ethics, taking as a point of departure the historical analysis, sociological analysis and so on, one can provide for them. I don’t think that people who try to decipher the truth should have to provide ethical principles or practical advice at the same moment, in the same book and the same analysis. All this prescriptive network has to be elaborated and transformed by people themselves (1988a:16).

In other words, if difference is to be respected, people must be given the freedom to guide themselves. McNay’s demand that Foucault outline moral norms shows that she
has not understood this fundamental aspect of his ethical thought.\textsuperscript{14} This is not to say that it is contrary to Foucault’s ethics to resist unacceptable behaviour, or to explain why it is unacceptable, or to explain the merits of particular ways conducting a life, as I do at the end of this work. This is not to lay down universal norms or to attempt to judge what is ‘valid behaviour’ in a generalising sense.

For the Greeks, ethos - ‘the deportment and the way to behave’ - was not achieved by compulsion, or by conversion, but by ‘labor of self upon self’ (1988:6). Part of this labour involved acquiring knowledge:

One cannot care for self without knowledge. The care for self is of course knowledge of self ... but it is also the knowledge of a certain number of rules of conduct or of principles which are at the same time truths and regulations. To care for self is to fit oneself out with these truths. That is where ethics is linked to the game of truth (1988:5).

It is the expansion of the knowledge in the modern archive that Foucault aims for in his genealogies; he is, in fact, offering us hypomnemata which we may use as we choose. Having provided this ‘possibility of self determination’, finally, he leaves ‘to the people themselves ... the choice of their own existence’ (1989:312).

Foucault actually shows in The Use of Pleasure that ethical behaviour is possible in the absence of a universal normative morality. Within the (unacceptable) limits of the Greek male’s assumption that his domination over others was legitimate and proper, his ideal of self-mastery meant that he aimed to rule with wisdom, moderation and sensitivity, rather than tyrannically and brutally. The good government of the household depended upon the dignified and wise conduct of its mistress, the wife, who oversaw it. It behoved a man, then, to train and guide his young wife successfully, to keep her contented, and to avoid actions that would result in discord, uproar and disturbance. The marital relationship, thus, ‘took the form of a pedagogy and a government of behaviour’ (UP:155); the husband must train and govern his wife in order to achieve her cooperation, and to bring about the best possible qualities in her (from his own point of view). Thus, although there was no rule to say a man could not have sexual relations with whomever he chose, or that he could not coerce, beat or

\textsuperscript{14} In criticising from a Habermasian viewpoint, McNay fails to acknowledge that the fundamental premises of Habermas are radically opposed to Foucault's. Habermas' ideal is a utopian world of perfect communication, in which the operations of power would be largely absent. According to McNay, he has 'the idea of a non-adversarial dialogue, that is, the notion that forms of communication have a liberating potential once they have been freed from the distorting effects of conventional norms and modes of authority' (1992a:170). For Foucault there can never be a world without relations of power, and it is dangerously delusory to believe that communication can be freed from them. McNay's most absurd complaint is of 'the inadequacy of the idea of care for the self as a way of analysing social relations' (1992a:174).
punish his wife, such behaviour was not suited to the conduct of a moderate and prudent man who wished to produce beauty in himself, and in his wife and household as a reflection of himself. Gentleness and moderation towards his wife, and fidelity, were ideals that he would choose to practice, in order to create a complementarity between himself and his wife, that brought out beautiful behaviour in her, and a household that was well-ordered and peaceful.

There is no denying that these ideals show, as McNay says, ‘an active self acting on an objectified world and interacting with other subjects who are defined as objects or narcissistic extensions of the primary subject,’ (1992a:171). Nevertheless, what can be abstracted from these relations, despite their unpropitious asymmetry, is the important point that an ethical relation with the other can flow from the aesthetic ideal of creating one’s life as a work of art. Of course, today’s notion of a desirable relation with the other is different, particularly with regard to egalitarian reciprocity. In other words, our codes of conduct are different, but this does not alter the fact that the ideal outcome of the Greek male’s relation with those he took to be his rightful subordinates was an ethical one.

Even today, some relations with others are, or seem to be, unavoidably asymmetrical, such as those between parent and child, teacher and student, supervisor and subordinate. The Greek model shows that in such circumstances of unavoidable asymmetry, a relation that seeks to produce the best possible outcome for both parties can exist, and can follow from an aesthetic relation to the self. I must stress again that this is not suggesting that the domination of the Greek women was necessary or tolerable, or that they would not have been much better off in conditions of freedom. But, accepting that women were seen at that time as properly subordinate to men, the outcome of the ethical relationship was surprisingly generous, respectful of dignity and sensitive to the other.

What is problematic in Greek society was not the aesthetic approach to ethics, but the denial of that ethical life to others, including women. The ideal behaviour of the Greek husband towards his wife was formulated within a particular conception of marriage as existing for reproduction, and of the wife as complementary and subordinate to the husband. In The Care of the Self, Foucault shows how in the later Greco-Roman period, the adoption, within a similar aesthetics of existence and a similar principle of self-mastery, of a different conception of marriage as companionate meant that the relationship between husband and wife could be reciprocal, and the spouse be seen as ‘identical to oneself’ (CS:163-4; see also 1986a:358).

Again, Foucault is not to be taken as recommending that particular form of heterosexual marriage as an ideal. What he is saying is that there can be many
different ethical outcomes of the aesthetic relation to the self and the self-mastery that follows from it, depending upon the principles chosen for building a beautiful life. In *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, Foucault is constructing a genealogy of the ways in which people have related to self and of the principles and rules they have adopted in choosing their actions to achieve an aesthetic outcome. What he *is* recommending is that we bring our thought to bear on our actions in order to achieve control over them, rather than blindly obeying the beliefs and practices of our era, which, Foucault argues, is not to be an ethical subject of one’s conduct (UP:28). If ‘ethics is the deliberate form assumed by liberty’ (1988:4), if we want the other to practise ethics, we must be willing to trust that their choices will be as wise as our own would be for them.

Of course, there can be no guarantee that having the goal of a beautiful life will prevent undesirable behaviour, any more than professing Christianity can. The Greeks, after all, provide just such an example. However, as many feminists and Foucault himself have made clear, we would today recognise the life of the Greek male owner of slaves and dominator of women to be excessive and not at all beautiful. Foucault’s work on care of the self does not replace his earlier work on power. Agonism in relation to the self does not supersede agonism in relation to the exterior world; these are linked, and for freedom, both are necessary. Foucault does not claim the absolute freedom of the individual of the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*. With a good understanding, or Spinoza’s adequate ideas mentioned earlier, we can be free to act upon our own actions, but in addition, since our freedom, and our survival, depends also upon the limits set by the world, upon the actions of the world upon us, we can act upon others’ actions. The individual body is not isolated, but is part of the larger bodies of community and world, which impact upon it constantly.

**Ethics and the other**

Is there any substance to the suggestion that Foucault, in astonishing opposition to all he has said about the subject’s construction through the (social) operations of power, evokes ‘an aesthetics of self which is practised apart from others’ or that ‘ethics can be practiced apart from other social and economic structures’? (Diprose 1994:34). Diprose and McNay both claim that Foucault suggests that ‘these techniques of the self ... lie outside the social, economic and political institutions which disseminate disciplinary power’ (Diprose 1994:30; McNay 1992a:152-3, 164-5). The basis of this is a passage from an interview Foucault
made in 1983 (1986a:350). What Foucault was trying to convey was that we do not have to believe that the ‘great political and social and economic structures’ are the ideal form into which our personal ethics should be slotted, or that we cannot change anything without the risk of ‘ruining our economy, our democracy, and so on’ (1986a:350, my emphasis). Foucault himself later refutes this accusation when he says:

Here we touch on one of the most important aspects of this activity devoted to oneself: it constituted, not an exercise in solitude, but a true social practice. And it did so in several ways (CS:51; see ensuing pages for the ‘several ways’).

It is true that for Foucault, it is the relation to the self that sets up our mode of relating to the other. As he says, ‘the relation to the self takes ontological precedence’ (1988:7). Elsewhere, he confirms this when he says that it is through the relation to the self that the individual becomes ‘a moral subject of his own actions’ (1986a:352). In other words, it is the mode in which we act upon our actions, the principles we use in selecting and controlling them, that determines how we conduct ourselves in relation to others.

A comparison with existential ethics is illuminating here. Where for Beauvoir, as for Kant, morality is possible only in conditions of conscious rational control over what is external to consciousness rather than being subject to it, for Foucault, it is the internal relation to self that is the site of the ethical. It is interesting that in the former perception, the primary relation is the external one and yet the result, as I have argued, is an impoverished ethical relation to the other. In the latter, the primary relation is internal, with the self, and yet a much more sensitive and respectful relation to the other emerges from it, as I have also argued. Significantly, it avoids the fundamental hostility of the Hegelian relationship. It is difficult to see what serious feminist objection there can be to this. To say that the relation to self takes ontological precedence is not to ‘privilege’ it over relations with others, as McNay argues (1994:152). Ontological precedence does not imply superior value; rather it implies a necessary prior existence. In suggesting that the relation to the self is prior to the ethical relation to the other, Foucault offers a new way of thinking about the construction of the feminine self. He is suggesting that rather than accepting the

15. It is not irrelevant to note that these critics turn to interviews for their evidence rather than to the more carefully worded books and articles.

16. As I showed in chapter two, difference cannot be respected in a philosophy that posits the ‘I’ as the universal Subject of history, totally spontaneous, transparent, pure and free, and the other as containing all alterity.
relation of masculine and feminine as necessarily primary in forming the feminine self, we can look first at the relation of self to self. Then we can consciously work on creating a different relation - firstly to the self, ‘to attain a certain kind of being’ (1988:2). Then, he says, we are more free to choose how we will relate to the other. In other words, for Foucault, it is the relation to the self that can give us greater ability to resist the external operations of power which ‘seek’ to construct our relation to the other in a certain mould.

The government of the self by the self, Foucault says, ‘is integrated with the government of others’ (1989:296). In other words, he suggests that although the relation to the self can shape the relation to the other, it is not separable from it. I cannot separate myself from the world and from others, but I can have some control over what my relation to myself will be and what my relation to others will be.

*Dandyism*

Another objection to the aesthetic approach to ethics is the fear that we are being encouraged to become frivolous, dandies, concerned for no-one but ourselves, as McNay and others suggest (McNay 1992a:163-65; Grimshaw 1993:68; Yeatman 1990:293). However, as Foucault explains, those who have adopted the aesthetic mode of relationship to self are not the shallow individualists, the ‘idle, strolling spectators’, feared by critics, but have been practising the difficult art, firstly, of knowing both the world and the self as they are, and secondly, of imagining them otherwise and transforming them - ‘a difficult interplay between the truth of what is real and the exercise of freedom’ (1986a:40-2). The notion of actively and deliberately fashioning oneself implies a rejection of slavishness of all kinds, including externally imposed styles and fads, and excesses of passion. A person dominated by his or her desires or emotions is hardly practising the self-command necessary to construct a work of art. This bears some similarity to both Kant and Sartre who, in different ways, see desires as inimical to moral being, as described in chapter two. Foucault's insight is that, unlike Kant, he does not want to disallow fulfilment of desire as an end, but wants us to adopt a reflective approach to this. That is, he does not want to negate desires so much as to allow us to choose how we relate to them. Unlike Sartre, he does not suspect emotion because it is a form of self-deception, but, again, suggests we can put some effort into understanding and possibly changing its effects.

Foucault discusses ‘individualism’ in *Care of the Self*, where he finds ‘entirely different realities are lumped together’ under this heading. Critics of this aspect of Foucault’s thought appear to be thinking of the first kind of ‘individualism’ he mentions, an attitude which conceives of the self as atomistic,
attempts to ward off the ‘interference’ of others in its pure authenticity and autonomy, and ‘is associated with an exaltation of individual singularity’. Secondly, Foucault distinguishes an attitude of ‘positive valuation of private life, ... the importance given to family relationships ... the forms of domestic activity’; and thirdly, an attitude toward ‘the intensity of the relations to the self, ... [taking] oneself as an object of knowledge and as a field of action’ so as to change oneself (CS:42). While he says that it is possible for these attitudes to be combined, such ‘connections are neither constant or necessary’ (CS:42). It is ironic that Foucault’s suggestion that we consider replacing the first kind of ‘individualism’ with a more realistic and reflexive relation to the self is met with accusations of dandyism and of rejecting the very social, economic and political structures which he is telling us have subjected us! Citing the early texts, Foucault shows that the care of the self is very far from the first attitude of individualism: ‘Socrates shows the ambitious young man that it is quite presumptuous of him to want to take charge of the city ... if he has not first learned that which it is necessary to know in order to govern: he must first attend to himself’ (CS:44). Apuleius wonders that men pay attention to those parts of the body they wish to use and yet ‘they do not also cultivate the soul by reason’ (CS:45). And Epictetus says that man, unlike the animals, ‘must attend to himself ... because the god [Zeus] deemed it right that he be able to make free use of himself, and it was for that reason that he endowed him with reason’ (CS:47).

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I want to turn finally to the question of women’s difference, but one more point of contention between critical feminists and Foucault remains to be discussed. This is a claim concerning Foucault’s basic philosophical assumptions - in effect that where Sartre assumes an extra-social cogito, Foucault assumes an extra-social body. Although I have already discussed the relation between body, thought and power in Foucault’s philosophy, this is an important issue for feminism that requires a direct answer.

**Foucault’s philosophy of the body**

Diprose suggests that Foucault makes use of a ‘pre-cultural body’ (1994:29), or a body that lies ‘outside of signification’ (1994:77).\(^{17}\) Grosz implies something

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\(^{17}\) But it is she who disembodies the feminine subject when she uses a logic of identity to explain its creation. ‘While subjection is the subjection of bodies, the promotion of new modes of subjectivity cannot
similar when she says, ‘in Foucault, it is bodies and pleasures that either preexist the sociopolitical deployments of power or resist them’ (1994:156). Diprose is concerned that the possibility of recreating ‘oneself differently seems to imply ... a space for agency outside the effects of a disciplinary moral code’ (1994:29). In other words, she believes that Foucault suggests that there is a ‘pre-cultural’ body which is outside of power relations - that is, that the body is to Foucault what consciousness is to Sartre. As I have explained, for Foucault mind is body, and an important part of it, and he has never asserted that all subjection applies only to the bodily part of a body/mind dichotomy. For Foucault, philosophy is ‘an exercise of oneself [one’s body] in the activity of thought’ (UP:9). Diprose claims that for Foucault ‘the operation of power [upon bodies] is ahead of conscious intervention’ (1994:29, my emphasis). Foucault has not said that bodily effects are always prior to mental effects, nor is he saying that the movement of the mind may not counteract forces applied to the body. It is absurd to accuse the ‘effort to free thought from what it silently thinks’ (UP:9) of being an effort to isolate the body from the action of the world upon it, as Sartre attempts to isolate consciousness. In contrast to Foucault’s body, Sartre’s consciousness is absolutely free and is never touched by the social world or by the operations of power. Grosz’s suggestion that Foucault’s bodies and pleasures preexist the operations of power assumes a freedom similar to Sartre’s, which Foucault firmly fundamentally denies. Rather, he is suggesting that we too can actively engage in the operations of power upon ourselves, rather than passively incorporating them.

Too often, Diprose speaks of embodiment as a process over which we can have no control, and of embodied ethos as though carved in stone, unable to be changed. Thus she defines ethos as: ‘My habitual way of life, ... or set of habits’ (1994:18), emphasising its embodied, non-reflective, involuntary nature. This contrasts sharply with Foucault’s definition of ethos as one’s ‘philosophy-as-life’ (1986a:374). For him, a ‘habit’ may be unconsciously inserted into the body, but it may also be consciously chosen or fought against, and these are far more reflective and voluntary procedures than Diprose allows. As Foucault says ‘The man who has a good ethos ... is a person who practices freedom in a certain manner’ (1988:6).

simply involve asserting mind over matter’, says Diprose (1994:29). The trouble is that in saying this Diprose is guilty of asserting matter over mind!
Feminists frequently dismiss Foucault’s suggestions concerning the relation to the self and the possibility of new forms of subjectivity on the grounds that they can apply only to men, and are not capable of being applied to women in their difference. Because this is a widespread criticism that has had the effect of dismissing this vital aspect of Foucault’s thought, it is important to acknowledge the criticism in this particular chapter and to summarise what I have already said that answers this critique. Since in the next chapter I give a detailed analysis of the relation between Foucault’s thought and the difference feminism of Irigaray, I will touch on only some aspects of the issue of women’s difference here.

I have acknowledged that Foucault is inept when speaking of women, and that he is androcentric in using mainly male examples. The appropriate question at this stage is whether this inattention to the feminine indicates an essential requirement in his philosophy for the feminine Other against whom a masculine-identified philosophy is constructed, as I have argued is the case for Sartre. To put this in more Foucaultian terms, is there an essential need in his philosophy for the feminine as the ‘positive unconscious’, the bearer of disavowed attributes, like the unreason which he considers to have been incarcerated by humanist thought? Or, on the other hand, does he indulge in a thought similar to Beauvoir’s, assuming that the masculine model is actually neutral, and that women lose nothing by being assimilated into it?

Naomi Schor is one feminist who complains that Foucault denies the specificity of the feminine and suspects him of wanting to absorb it into the ‘neutral’ masculine. Her specific argument depends upon a single phrase in one text, the memoirs of Herculine Barbin, the hermaphrodite who was hounded in an effort to determine his/her ‘true’ sex, in nineteenth century France. Schor contends that Foucault’s words the “happy limbo of non-identity”, prove that he actually wants to eliminate sexual difference, and, effectively, to promote an ‘indifferent’ masculine (Schor 1989:53). I argue, on the contrary, that Schor is wrong to believe that Foucault would claim that sexual difference either can or should be eliminated. The ever-present nature of power means that it is likely that bodies of similar kind will always be grouped and targeted, and indeed will group themselves, most especially in the case of female and male bodies with their very different reproductive capacities, and since sex is such a ‘material' and 'vital' aspect of our bodies (HS:152). Further, as I argued in chapter three, through his attention to the importance of the dimension of time, Foucault was successful in his great aim of creating a philosophy capable of encompassing difference. He has been concerned with the historical form taken by difference, and, more broadly, with the exclusions of difference in the modern era. It is perverse to suggest that would he look forward to its elimination on such a
reading, against the much stronger evidence provided by a thorough examination of his entire philosophy.

At this stage, it seems that Schor and Foucault are at odds in some quite fundamental way. Schor is right to the extent that Foucault would deny the single *transhistorical* form of feminine embodiment which Schor seems to embrace when she speaks of ‘an irreducible difference’ between the sexes (1989:57). It is also true that Foucault wants difference to exist in its own right, rather than through the categorical opposition that Schor seems to prefer in refusing Foucault’s solution to Barbin’s predicament. As I will argue in chapter five, it is indeed in these two areas that feminism of difference is incompatible with Foucault.

Rosi Braidotti, however, agrees with Schor, saying that ‘Foucault’s reflections on this theme [of rape] fall short because he forgets the essential difference of the sexes, and its theoretical and political repercussions’ (1991:94; see Foucault 1988a:200-204, 285, 289). While I believe that Foucault did forget the reality of the woman’s body in his discussion of rape, this was done not because he wants to eliminate sexual difference, but because he was over-zealous in wanting to ‘disinvest’ sexuality as the source of truth about the self, forgetting that this is reality for today’s subject and therefore a vulnerable aspect of self (not to mention the knowledge women carry of rape as the woman’s abasement).

Rather than wanting to ignore or eliminate sexual difference, what Foucault wants ameliorated is ‘that rigid assignation and pinning-down to [our] sex’ that he sees as having been at the centre of our subjection in the modern era (Foucault PK:220). This surely has been one of the important aims of feminism. What he does believe is that specific forms of subjectivity are historical, and that therefore the possibility of transformation of the self is open to women, as it is to men. Thus Braidotti’s use of the word ‘essential’ points to a fundamental disagreement with Foucault.

The aim of the Greek self-training, of course, was self-mastery and it is true that this attribute was considered necessary, and indeed fully realisable, only in ruling class men. It is also true that women were treated as lesser beings. Diprose (1994) considers that the dominating position of these men invalidates Foucault’s suggestion that women can nevertheless take advantage of some their practices. She is suggesting that they were able to practice their self-mastery *only because* women and slaves provided the Other against whom the masterful male could identify himself. The short answer to this is that it is perfectly possible, as Foucault intended, to separate this dissymmetry from the notion of a chosen relation to the self.
Diprose continues: ‘Foucault’s aesthetics of self ... ignores, and possibly perpetuates, the power play operating in conceptual oppositions which generate and privilege man’s identity’ (1994:75). However, while it is true that Foucault does not often acknowledge man’s privilege as against woman, his philosophy of difference does not incorporate that privilege. As I argued at the end of chapter three, Foucault does not accept the symbolic relation of self and other as the entire or foremost basis upon which self is created. Rather, he wants to step around the conception of subjectivity as identity, and the valuing involved in this. For him, subjects are strategically specified as particular historical beings within particular regimes of truth. Not only is this an aspect of Foucault that feminists have taken up with enthusiasm, it is not reasonable to revert to a philosophy which Foucault avoids and which, furthermore, produces only an impasse for the feminine which cannot be overcome within its own logic, as I argued in chapter two. As Margaret Whitford points out, from Irigaray, the logic of identity is male (1991:59), and Foucault has offered a way around it. I believe this gift should be recognised as valuable, graciously accepted, and fully incorporated into feminist theory and practice.

The conclusive answer to these objections to an aesthetic relation to the self is that, as Foucault suggests, there is no alternative once we have accepted that the self is not given or ‘natural’ but created in the dimension of time within relations of power: ‘From the idea that the self is not given to us, I think there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art’ (1986a:351). That is, unless we prefer to be created by unplanned and often injurious and dangerous forces, or unless we want to forfeit our freedom to following a creed, with, very often, equally dangerous or totalitarian results. What is so often forgotten is that the relationship to the self is a creation, either with or without the subject’s cognition. Taking control over this process does not necessarily mean discarding all codes of behaviour, but rather a change in emphasis. Conduct can be referred to external codes of morality for strategic or practical purposes but the over-riding criterion will be one’s own making of oneself and one’s life according to chosen aesthetic ideals.

Conclusion

It is significant that the feminists Diprose and McNay who, like the Habermasian Thomas McCarthy, are highly critical of Foucault’s final work, see it as largely unconnected to the earlier work. What these critics miss is that Foucault sees the body/self as created through the action of other bodies upon it, unless we bring our own active thought into the equation. If we consider carefully how he thus conceives of the relation between the power of other bodies and the power of our
own, it is neither surprising nor inconsistent that he believes it possible for individuals to act upon their own bodies. The failure to realise that his work on the self is continuous with his earlier work on power and bodies may ‘explain’ the misinterpretation and subsequent rejection of the work on the self, but this failure is also a strategy in the Foucaultian sense, intended or not, that devalues his work to the advantage of those who benefit from the existing relations of power. Bernauer notes that Foucault’s fundamental approach to thought as a ‘force of flight’, or a ‘dynamic movement of relentless questioning’, ‘accounts for many features of it that may prove annoying to a systematically orientated commentator’ (1990:6). But, on the other hand, it is this very urge to ‘think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees’ (UP:8) that is attractive and encouraging to those who see that the currently dominant rationalities are to be feared. To read Foucault’s work on creating the self without being mindful of how he understands the body and the relations between subjectivity, truth and power means that this important final work can be easily dismissed. Much that is of enormous value in fighting the dangers that we face today is thereby discredited and lost.

The various feminist objections I have discussed do not invalidate Foucault’s final work. It remains true that there is good reason for women to take up his suggestion that we get free of the self that has been constituted by external forces and instead select for ourselves the principles upon which to base our actions and the rules to follow in making ourselves ethical subjects. It is strange that feminists have generally refused to consider the possibility of women making themselves as works of art when they have so clearly demonstrated the androcentrism of the world in which women are made. Foucault offers a way of investigating the material of the ‘library’, of subjecting it to searching scrutiny, before choosing what we will take from it.

There has been a particularly outraged reaction to the suggestion that we might find something worth taking up in the aspirations and practices of the elite men of ancient Greece. Such thinking seems to imply that the sorting of good aspirations from bad is an either/or matter, but can women safely assume the obvious when, as Diprose says, values are generated in opposition to the other (1994:32)? Foucault is asking us to examine our own unthought, to take nothing for granted, neither how our values are created nor whether this is the right question to ask in the first place.

Clearly, women must be doubly careful in scrutinising the values involved in the social codes they may choose to follow. In fact, as Irigaray understands it (and Foucault does not), women have the task of inventing the feminine, since the world has so far had only one sex, the masculine: ‘For one sex and its lack ... still does not add up to two’ (Irigaray 1985:159). However, Foucault would
argue that moral codes have been instruments of subjection not only of women. It is important that feminists do not dichotomise too simply between ‘men’ and ‘women’, since hierarchies exist within and among these categories. The rules have been constructed by relatively small groups of (mainly) men, and have been imposed upon many kinds of other.

An important question that arises for women is where we are to find the social codes of behaviour that we can call our own. Foucault believes that ‘power is always already there’, that one is never ‘outside’ it, that there are no ‘margins’ for those who break with the system to gambol in’ (PK:141). The only place to search, therefore, is in the ‘library’, where, he says ‘there is a treasury of devices, techniques, ideas, procedures’ to be drawn on (1986a:349-50).18

Foucault suggests that it is our relation to self which determines how we form ourselves as moral subjects of our own actions (1986a:352). There are, he says, four major aspects of this. Firstly, we have to decide what is our ethical substance - what it is that is to be addressed by ethics. For example, it could be feelings, desires, sexuality. He suggests that ‘bodies and pleasures’ are what our ethics should address today. This would be a move towards overcoming our subjection through sexuality, allowing us to relate to ourselves and to others through these broader aspects of ourselves, which are less easy for power to penetrate (see HS:103, 145; also PK:125). The added advantage for women would be getting away from the masculine focus on the phallic and the possibility of taking the other into account:

What I want to ask is: Are we able to have an ethics of acts and their pleasures which would be able to take into account the pleasure of the other? Is the pleasure of the other something which can be integrated in our pleasure, without reference to law, to marriage, to I don’t know what? (1986a:346).

The second aspect of the relation to self is the type of relation to the moral code - for example, natural law, divine law, rational rule, or ‘the attempt to give your existence the most beautiful form possible’ (1986a:353). As noted, it is the latter that he thinks the most suitable for us today, since we recognise that there is no foundational truth. Then one must decide what constitutes a beautiful life. For the Greeks, this was to practise an art of life, creating beauty through an

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18. Foucault has himself provided a wealth of material in The Use of Pleasure and in Care of the Self which I have not described, my aim being to persuade readers that the care of the self is a worthwhile pursuit, rather than to instruct in its practice. However, an example of the practical material Foucault provides is his detailed descriptions of how the cultivation of the self was understood and practiced in the first two centuries A.D. (see CS:45-67). This includes, for example, “testing procedures” (58), exercises (59-60), and the process of self-examination (60-2).
actively crafted, orderly and moderate existence.19 What we are to do to transform ourselves and our conduct is the third aspect - for example, through learning and exercises, through checking one’s conduct against the rules one has adopted, through combat, or through decipherment of desires, as in psychoanalysis (1986:27).

Finally, there is the telos, the kind of being we aspire to in our moral behaviour. For example, we may aspire to purification, to tranquility of soul, or to mastery of the self (1986:28). Despite its inimical name, the Greek principle of self-mastery seems very worthy of consideration for today’s women who, as Beauvoir complains, are ‘trained to please’. This principle of ‘self-domination’ means exercising power over the self in order to control one’s own actions.

Having selected the criteria, the next move is to choose the rules that one will follow in order to make a life that conforms to those criteria. Some feminists have suggested that this means that it is essential that women’s particular ethical practices to be unearthed from the past (Grosz 1994:158-9; Grimshaw 1993:66; Soper 1993:40). While this seems to imply that women are somehow constructed outside of the rationality of their cultural time, I agree wholeheartedly that genealogies that show in detail how women have been made, and have made themselves, are vital. Not only do we need to know what we are, how we have been made, in order to change ourselves, but it is disheartening to use a library so disproportionately filled with material about men. That modern Western women have been made within the time-span of one general rationality as men does not rule out the possibility that different strategies of power have been applied to them. Our own genealogical investigations can reveal these.20

I have completed my account of Foucault’s thought but it remains to link this more closely to feminist questions of significance. In conceptualising a subject of action that is not divided from emotion, ego, body, world and other bodies, and yet has agency, Foucault has supplied the elements I believe to be required in a feminist philosophy.21 Why, then, has his thought been taken up so half-heartedly?

19. As explained, immoderation was considered a slavish subjection to desire

20. Much excellent work has already been done by feminist historians - encouragingly, there is far too much to cite, but the work of Caroline Bynum and also Joyce Salisbury, are dazzling examples.

21. As I found in chapter two, Sartre's disavowal of the body excludes woman from the moral realm of transcendence, and his devaluation of emotion excludes one of the strong attributes of the feminine from the moral order.
I believe that one important answer to this lies in the long struggle feminists have had over the question of feminine identity, and the way that they have seen this as crucial. The question for many has been: how can women become self-referential, acting subjects when the modern subject is male and the feminine is merely negatively defined as its Other? I believe that, to a large extent, the answers that have emerged have been framed by the terms of this question. In my concluding chapter, I suggest that we need to interrogate the questions we ask ourselves with great care, and, in particular to consider what we are taking for granted. It is time for feminists to take up Foucault’s challenge positively - to see how we can think the problem differently.
Foucault and Feminism: Making Our Freedom

If it were not for the poetic or prophetic character the philosophic and experimental would soon be at the ratio of all things, and stand still, unable to do other than repeat the same dull round over again.

William Blake, There is No Natural Religion (2)

For questioning is the piety of thought.

Heidegger 1977:317

The general question I want to address in this chapter is: How are we to use Foucault's thought? This begins the task of 'thinking ourselves differently', which, as Foucault says, is an arduous and endless labour. Rather than offering us universal rules to live by, Foucault wants to show how we can free ourselves of what in our thought constitutes our present constraints and our present dangers. In seeking solutions to the problems that face us, the methodology he recommends is to ask our questions of the present time. He suggests that we search, not for answers that are valid for all time, but for answers to the specific problems of our time. I want to adopt this methodology in considering feminist directions - to ask: What is good and what is bad for us to think and to do in the present cultural time?

To simplify matters, I have divided the chapter into two parts, both generally concerned with how we might change, to 'free [our] thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently' (Foucault UP:9), and with how we might become authors of our own conduct. The first part is devoted to explaining why and how Foucault's genealogical method of analysis is useful to feminism. I ask what kind of feminism emerges from Foucault's thought. Through debating the merits of feminism of difference, I address the question of what feminism of difference is silently thinking. What does it take for granted? How could it be thought differently? I intend this discussion to be a practice of Foucault's "agonism", a 'relationship which is at the same time reciprocal incitation and
struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation which paralyses both sides than a permanent provocation' (1986b:222).

Genealogy is concerned with what we are, and how we have been made - with how our interiority has been 'hollowed out' (Gillan 1988:37). In the second part of the chapter, I turn to consider more positively what criteria we might use in making ourselves differently. Considering how we have been made, and what we have suffered under the humanist regime, I ask what women might seek instead. Since I do not want to tell women what to do, think, or be, I consider what it is about humanism that has confined us. To do this, I turn to firstly Heidegger's critique of humanism, which I discussed briefly in chapter two, and to his thought on Being. I know that some feminists may find Heidegger's thought annoyingly vague, preferring clearer or more specific directions. To this I respond that there is no easy way out of thinking for ourselves. As in physical exercise, thought has to be carried out by the body in question. Rather than 'vague', thought such as Heidegger's and Foucault's is better described as unconfining and freeing. This loosening of the fetters that bind us can be disconcerting and uncomfortable. To assist in the effort of thinking differently, I devote a brief section to what some philosophers, Foucault, Heidegger and Spinoza, have to say about the practice of thought. In my final section, still in keeping with the theme of what women might seek in place of the humanist regime that has confined them, I consider the relation that the masculine and the feminine have had to time in humanist thought. This turn may also appear startling, but in fact Foucault's archaeological thought is a consideration of humanist man's relation to time. I am merely asking how woman fits in this modern conception of temporality, what this has meant for human lives, and what changes we might want to make. In another sense, this is a genealogical consideration of woman's making, and so offers the possibility of change.

Feminism and Genealogy

I have argued that, in the realm of the symbolic, woman's immanent being has made possible man's identity as the transcendent being who creatively changes, and dominates, the world. In these conceptual terms, the feminine has no positive, independent existence. Man defines himself through woman, and these symbolic constructions have become stabilised in our thought. They have taken on a solidity, a permanent, enduring, character that is not legitimated in any stable way but is based upon the mutable operations of power. So, the categories masculine and feminine are generally taken as given. While, of course, feminists are concerned to question these categories, it seems to be an inescapable fact that we
must continue to use them. Nevertheless, in this part of the chapter I want to subject their use within feminism to close scrutiny.

That the feminine has no positive, independent existence is reflected in the ways that woman is represented as of lesser value, as complement to man, or as flawed. Furthermore, in this era when sexuality is conceived as lying at the core of the self, this sexualised identification tends to pervade a woman's entire being. Consequently, it constitutes a very large part of the 'library' of material from which women's identities are constructed today. Seen in these terms, the problem for feminism is: How is the feminine to be conceived differently, and positively, when it is 'always already' posed as man's negative Other? Furthermore, the relation between man and woman is unusual in that their lives are merged in multiple and ineluctable ways. As Beauvoir says, woman is peculiar in that she has 'a bond that unites her to her oppressors [that] is not comparable to any other. ... she is the Other in a totality of which the components are necessary to one another' (SS:19-20). This peculiarity of woman constitutes a knotty problem that has been a preoccupation of feminist thought. How are women to become self-authored beings?

**Problems and answers**

One answer that feminists have given to this problem is to suggest that the best remedy is to deconstruct the masculine/feminine dichotomy along with the modernist transcendental subject with which it is entangled. Some feminists have expressed dismay at this, fearing that deconstruction means that the solid basis for the existence of feminism is dissolved. As Rosalind Delmar explains:

> To deconstruct the subject 'woman', to question whether 'woman' is a coherent identity, is also to imply the question of whether 'woman' is a coherent political identity, and therefore whether women can unite politically (1986:28).

And it leads Nancy Hartsock, for example, to ask suspiciously:

> Why is it that just at the moment when so many of us who have been silenced begin to demand the right to name ourselves, to act as subjects rather than objects of history, that just then the concept of subjecthood becomes problematic? (1990:163).

If the potential loss of the Subject is worrying, further cause for dismay is that, as I remarked in chapter one, women value their femininity, and resent what they take to be an attempt to abolish it. In fact, some have even seen Foucault's suggestion that sexuality is at the heart of the modern technologies of power as an attempt to foreclose debate on sexuality, before those who have been excluded
from it have had a chance to express a view on it: 'Women's relation to the sexual ... has been tacit. To close a discussion that began for some only very recently is to leave those speakers again beyond consideration ... It is too soon, then, for silence' (Snitow et al 1981, quoted by Whitford 1991:215).

In fact, deconstruction, at least in some feminist readings, aims, like Foucault, to make a space for difference to exist on its own terms, and does not, therefore, aim for a sexual neutrality (see Grosz 1989:30-1). However, other feminist writers take seriously the belief that an ideal of sexual neutrality has been held by 'postmodern' theorists. Whitford, for example, argues that 'our present organization of the male and female' must be rearticulated before 'a state 'beyond sexual difference'' can be contemplated (1991:22); Jill Marsden speaks of the abandonment of 'specific difference' as 'too swift' (1993:197). As Grosz explains it, deconstruction means revealing the interdependence that exists in binary oppositions and thus exposing the violence involved in them. Not only does this reveal the debt of the privileged term and its violence towards that which it suppresses, but it reveals an "excess of difference", a "space of free play", a deferral towards other possibilities, in which, it is said, other subjectivities can be constituted (Diprose 1994:35), and space where pure difference can exist.

The disagreement between feminists over whether Derrida and Foucault aim for sexual neutrality is important here, because it involves the crucial concept of pure, as against oppositional, difference. This means the understanding that difference is not necessarily posed against an Other, but can be posed in a disengaged way, as, say, a bird is different from a fish. This is what Foucault means when he speaks of allowing differences to 'revolve of their own accord' (Foucault 1977b:186-7). This means, of course, that woman and man can be conceived as different without the necessity of posing them as either the same or as opposed. Equality, then, would take on a different meaning. For Beauvoir it means being conceived and treated as the same, whereas within the concept of pure difference, it means being conceived as different and being given equal respect and access to resources appropriate to that difference.

The other problem that many have seen in the deconstructive move is that it removes 'woman', the uniting concept which, it has been assumed, provides the basis of women's political coherence as a feminist movement, as mentioned by Delmar, above. This has been addressed in several ways. Iris Young, for instance, endorses a 'politics of difference', and suggests, as an alternative, that groups can form, and represent themselves, on the basis of their particular difference, creating strategic alliances between groups to achieve specific ends (1990a:156-91). Another example is Butler, who suggests that the problem is contained within the assumptions of identity politics (1990:147). That is, she sees the question of political identity as containing the problem, rather like Foucault, who
says: 'What is the answer to the question? The problem. How is the problem
resolved? By displacing the question' (1977b:185). Foucault is suggesting that we
need to consider whether it is the way that we have formulated the question that
makes the problem appear. If we displace the question, sidestep it, by asking a
different question, the problem disappears, or takes on a radically different form,
which requires quite a different answer. I will have more to say of this.
Meanwhile, I mean to point to the disquiet felt by some feminists over the
question of identity, and to formulate the question whether the questions that
some postmodern feminisms pose may contain more than the inevitable trace of
that which they seek to reject. In other words, I ask whether the framing of the
problem results in an answer that remains within the terms of what it is intended
to contradict.

In posing this question, I am thinking specifically of the positive response
that some feminists have given to the problem of finding a way for women to
become self-authored beings. This is the effort to give woman the identity she
lacks though emphasising an 'essential difference of the sexes' (Braidotti
1991:94), or an 'irreducible difference' (Schor 1989:57). Schor 'concede[s] the
strategic efficacy of undoing sexual oppositions and positionalities, all the while
pursuing the construction of [sexual] difference' (1989:58). This is similar to
Luce Irigaray's feminism of difference which attempts to incorporate the
deconstructive approach along with several others, including, especially, feminist
psychoanalysis and phenomenology. Her aim is to construct positive
representations of the feminine as sexually different, together with a wide-ranging
examination of the foundations and presuppositions of masculinist philosophy
(see Whitford 1991:2).

The aim in insisting upon an essential, or irreducible sexual difference is to
confront the 'indifference' or sameness of masculinist texts (including The Second
Sex), which simply subsume the feminine into the masculine, and to create the
grounds for a specifically female subjectivity. In Schor's case, this insistence on
difference is a 'politics' but it is definitely not a 'temporary tactical necessity ....
difference does have a future' (Schor 1989:57). Irigaray, too, is concerned with
creating an alternative to the 'universal' subject, with bringing into language the
feminine which is excluded by masculinist thought, so that these feminine others
can be 'defined in and of themselves, in other words, as a different subjectivity'
(1995:7). Similarly to Schor, Irigaray asserts that sexual difference can never be
neutralised: 'This neutralization, if it were possible, would mean the end of the
**Measuring differences: Comparing Foucault and feminism**

I take feminism of difference as my starting point because, as I will argue, it has some important congruities with Foucault's thought. The comparison between the two will, I believe, highlight the benefits of Foucault's approach. I will be arguing that feminism of difference, despite its valuable insights, does not think its concepts or its strategies sufficiently deeply. That is, the theory is restricted by a dubious initial assumption, which leads to conclusions that are not well-founded. Before I begin to make these arguments, however, I will clarify the aspects of feminism of difference that are important for my argument.

Feminists of difference fear 'the neutral as loss of identity' (Irigaray 1993:21), and, not unreasonably, are suspicious that the 'promised utopia of sexual indifferentiation' means that the same old masculine model would prevail with the same old pretence of 'neutrality' (Schor 1989:57). Irigaray contrasts herself with Beauvoir who, 'is not at the forefront of women's struggles to be recognized as having their own identity .... Instead of refusing to be ... the other sex, what I ask is to be considered as actually an/other woman, irreducible to the masculine subject' (1995:8-9). I am dubious, not with this answer to the problem of feminine independence, but with the question that underlies it: How can women achieve an identity of their own? Like Foucault, I am asking whether the question is the problem. Irigaray says that, 'if the other is not defined according to its actual reality, it is no more than another self, not a true other' (1995:9). However, I ask, more fundamentally, whether it is necessary to define the other beyond recognising its singularity. I agree with Irigaray in wanting the Same to recognise the other's difference, but I question whether definition of the other need be pursued further, and pinned to an 'actual reality'. I will return to this question to discuss it in more depth below.

Because they see the lack of a shared femininity as a political problem for feminism, some feminists have suggested the adoption of a 'strategic essentialism', possibly signalling a 'difference between a strategic and a substantive or real essentialism' (Ellen Rooney interviewing Spivak 1989:126). For example, Spivak speaks of 'a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously political interest' (1987a:205). She recognises that such a move is risky, since women's difference has been given as the reason why they must occupy a subordinate position in the world. Nevertheless, she has argued that the risk is necessary, for unless women have a strong and positive identity as women, they are weak in terms of political struggle. As Spivak says, 'I feel that definitions are necessary in order to keep us going, to allow us to take a stand' (1987a:77). In the later interview, Spivak is more guarded, stressing that it is absolutely indispensable that we remain constantly aware that we are using essentialism for the purpose of 'political mobilization', 'otherwise strategy freezes into something
like what you call an essentialist position' (1989:127). Differently to this, Schor sees the deconstruction of 'sexual oppositions and positionalities' as a strategic move, while the construction of an irreducible difference is the long-term aim (1989:58).

For Spivak, a 'strategy suits a situation; a strategy is not a theory' (1989:127). She warns that we must avoid 'claiming a counter essence disguised under the alibi of a strategy' (1989:128). This is to be opposed to the claim of Irigaray to an essential sexual difference, informed by the morphology of the body (Whitford 1991:150). Morphology means 'the social and psychic meaning of the body' (Grosz 1989:111), but it is, nevertheless, based upon the specifically sexed body. Of this Spivak says, 'Biology doesn't just disappear, [but] it should not be offered as a ground of all explanations' (1989:148). She suggests that the vexed issue of essentialism should be dealt with by asking the more subtle question, 'how is the essence being used?' (1989:149). Irigaray, on the other hand, is more willing to risk taking the sexual specificity of male and female bodies into account: '[Gender] constitutes the irreducible differentiation that occurs on the inside of "the human race." Gender stands for the unsubstitutable position of the I and the You' (1993b:170).

Irigaray's notion of an irreducible difference is founded to a large extent upon psychoanalytic theories concerning the construction of libidinal economies in sexually specific bodies. Her understanding of the body as 'a site of inscription' of social meanings has resonance with Foucault's understanding of it as an effect of the operations of power. There is a difference to be found in Irigaray's emphasis on the imaginary in her use of psychoanalysis, for, as I explained in the second part of chapter four, Foucault rejects the notion that imaginary relations with the mother can be universalised as a basis of the sexed self. For Foucault, 'Nothing in man - not even his body - is sufficiently stable to serve as a basis for self-recognition or for understanding other men' (1977b:153). This is a statement that Irigaray would want to qualify in a complex way, since from the psychoanalytic point of view, sexed bodies do serve as a stable basis for sex-differentiated psychic developments, even though this is mediated by culture. Nevertheless, there is sufficient similarity between the two to mean that the question of sexual difference does not need to be disputed. Both theories understand sexual subjects as being made in an 'always already' existing world. Further, as I argued earlier, I understand from Foucault that it is likely that sexed bodies will 'always' be a point of convergence of power relations, since, as he says, sex is such a material and vital aspect of the body (HS:103, 152). Both he and Irigaray can, therefore, be understood as sharing an acceptance of a difference between the sexes that is 'irreducible'.
So, feminism of difference has important congruities with Foucault's thought concerning sexual subjectivity. Feminism of difference also seeks to escape the humanist logic that gives difference the bleak choice of either sameness or exile. Despite my criticism of the conclusions it reaches, like Foucault, it sees the possibility of differences existing in their own right, rather than as oppositions. Its strategy of creating from the existing cultural inheritance a positive self-constructed feminine identity gives it an interesting resonance with Foucault's suggestion that we create ourselves as works of art. Furthermore, it has an ethical intent that appears similar to Foucault's, including the project of making space for difference to be, of its own accord. Irigaray wants to 'restore the link between epistemology and ethics' (Whitford 1991:149), but she is also interested in giving women the possibility of creating their own ethical subjectivity. Not entirely dissimilarly, for Foucault the task of forming oneself as an ethical subject is carried out through the exercise of a thought that questions what one knows. Despite these apparent similarities, though, I will be arguing that there is an important ethical difference between Foucault and Irigaray.

Despite the similarities, there are some significant differences between feminism of difference and Foucault. These devolve upon the stress upon sexual difference in the pursuit of a feminine identity. Even though I have agreed that it is not inconsistent with Foucault to say that sexual difference will 'always' exist, I want to interrogate the question I have signalled: How can women achieve an identity of their own? I have two main questions to address to this: What do feminists of difference mean by identity? And: Is this the right question to ask at the outset? Is it the most vital question to address?

For feminism of difference, the vital question that is shared with Foucault is: How is woman to think herself differently? Of course Foucault does not address his question directly to the feminine, but, as I have argued, his fundamental effort to think difference positively makes his philosophy appropriate for feminism. His aim is to help us to get free of the subjectified internalised self which has been hollowed out through the myriad actions of power. So, what Foucault offers is another way to address the issue of thinking woman differently. With his help, the question can be put in terms of the relation between power and truth: What does it cost present-day feminine subjects to tell the truth about themselves and how could they tell a different, less costly, truth? Finally, bringing Foucault's own aspiration to 'think differently' to bear, the question might become: How is it possible to think differently, in terms of power and truth, the difference between the masculine and the feminine?

In the following section, I will deal with the points of disagreement between Foucault and feminism of difference, and then I will return to the general question of what it costs feminine subjects to tell the truth about themselves.
will discuss how women could tell a different, less costly, truth of themselves in the second part of the chapter, 'Making Ourselves Differently'. The final question, about thinking the difference between the masculine and the feminine will be addressed throughout. It will be addressed specifically in the second part of the chapter, in the discussion of the masculine and feminine positionality in time.

*Sexual difference, identity and strategy*

Irigaray is arguing for a positive feminine symbolic representation, and also aims to subvert through irony and mimicry. Her work is a serious critique of masculinist philosophy which 'experiments in new conceptual and representational practices' (Grosz 1989:102). My criticism is not of these aspects of her work, which I consider to be effective and useful. I understand, further, that she believes that these techniques are necessary because there is no 'outside' to the phallocentric discourses that have represented the feminine. Even here, I have no criticism, although this is the site of the difficulty. The problem, for me, lies in the globalisation of this view, so that the all-embracing theory, feminism of difference, is constructed from it.

In view of the importance and complexity of Irigaray's work, I do not, of course, intend to take on a full evaluation of it, at this stage of my study. Instead, I will address one main question: Would Foucault agree with the strategy of insisting upon sexual difference to supply the identity that the feminine lacks? To answer this, I will first consider what he says about the use of strategies, and then I will consider the more complex question of difference and identity. Although I will focus on this one question, an adequate answer will inevitably mean expanding into related aspects of Irigaray's, and others', work.

Feminists of difference argue that women need identity, that, in order to assert themselves, and in order to be treated directly as subjects, they must 'frame' themselves, either strategically or in their essential difference. The argument is that women lack a positive identity because they have been excluded by the humanist logic that seeks to absorb difference into the same. There is no doubt Foucault also wants difference to exist in its own right, rather than through categorical opposition. And he certainly agrees that strategic moves are necessary:

> When I speak of strategy, I am taking the term seriously: in order for a certain relation of forces not only to maintain itself, but to accentuate, stabilise and broaden itself; a certain kind of manoeuvre is necessary. [For example, the] psychiatrist had to manoeuvre in order to make himself recognised as part of the public hygiene system (PK:206).
So, Foucault would agree that strategy is necessary if the feminine is to be recognised as a worthy form of subjectivity. He would also not disagree with the theory that the humanist logic of the same, in its inability to recognise difference, is a source of woman's lack of identity. Certainly, he looks forward to the elimination of humanist thought. He would not, however, I believe, agree with the form of manoeuvre taken by Irigaray's head-on attack on the humanist masculinist logic, through the positing of a global difference for the feminine. It is not that he wants to deny feminine difference, but that its positing in this way is not good strategy, for several reasons which I will elaborate.

Firstly, in taking this stance, Irigaray is not operating a strategy, but is allowing theory to dominate. This may be what Spivak is referring to when she says 'strategy is not a theory', above. Foucault considers that, instead of this imposition of theory, careful analysis of the specifics is necessary:

> The role for theory today seems to me to be just this: not to formulate the global systematic theory which holds everything in place, but to analyre the specificity of the mechanisms of power, to locate the connections and extensions, to build little by little a strategic knowledge (PK:145).

Global theories are a 'terrorism' because of their totalising insistence on a singular answer (Foucault 1977:xii), and I am suggesting that the insistence on women's irreducible difference is too close to this for comfort. In fact, for Foucault, this theory addresses only one aspect of the problem, the humanist logic of the same. For him, the complexity of the issues involved means that a more circumspect approach is necessary, one that seeks to 'locate the connections and extensions' of the problem. Through what kind of thinking, he asks, has humanism brought itself into being? His answer has been to carry out an archaeology of 'man'. Through this he discloses that man has located himself in time in a particular way, as a universal Subject in charge of a history that is conceived as a continuous evolution. As I explained in chapter three, this, says Foucault, is how difference came to be excluded: the concept of the universal founding subject excludes difference. His answer to this is not to assert difference head on, but to confront the Subject. He does this by positing history not as a continuous evolution but as a series of events, and the subject not as universal but as made through the operations of power in the 'time of culture'. So, to conceive of the feminine in a Foucaultian manner, the emphasis is placed upon its historical nature, rather than upon its ubiquitous difference. My suggestion is that this is a more effective, and less risky, approach, and I will go on to argue this further.

Another issue of contention between Foucault and Irigaray is contained in those two words I queried earlier: the other must be defined, says Irigaray, in its 'actual reality' (1995:9, my emphasis). The difference is over what each thinker
means by the 'actual reality', the truth, of the other. Again, it is a matter of emphasis: Irigaray is prepared to take the risk of telling women what they are, not simply by recognising difference as existing in whatever form it may take, but by insisting that the feminine is different from the masculine in particular ways. The truth here, in its irreducibility, carries a trace of universalisation, rather than the historically located truth that Foucault prefers. This is a place where we can see that the question, in its focus on identity, may be the problem. For Irigaray, women need to be given an identity, an actual reality. In addition to our own identity, Irigaray insists that we need specifically female values. When she says we need 'the affirmation and definition of values of our own' (1993b:72), she means specifically feminine values. This supports my view that for Irigaray the difference between the sexes is the basic factor in her thought.

Quite differently, Foucault displaces the question, leaving it to us to discover what we already are through study of the genealogy, the operations of power, through which we have been formed. For Foucault, women's actual reality already exists in the history of their becoming, and only needs to be unearthed, not by him, but by themselves. Then, he says, by selecting the principles upon which to construct ourselves as 'works of art', and through programs of training and exercise, we can give ourselves a new constitution. We will then, again, have no need for 'identity', knowing what we are, instead, through knowing how we have made ourselves. We will have an 'actual reality' as solid and real as any other truth about our being, but of our own making. Whether we choose to make our gender an aspect of this is for us to negotiate, although it may be wise to consider what Foucault has said about sex as an instrument of power, as I argue below.

Foucault is more concerned with giving us the tools that we can use to discover what we are and to extend the possibilities of what we can be. Irigaray, on the other hand, believes that, as an initial step, 'In order to achieve a subjective status equivalent to that of men .... the whole framework of [women's] identity has to be constructed or reconstructed' (1993:46-7). In a general sense, I can agree with this, but not with its practice. For Foucault, as I explained at the end of chapter three, to tell people what they are is an 'indignity' - that is, an unethical denial of our freedom to be and to act. Even if we disregard the trace of universalisation I objected to above, to say the other's 'actual reality', or to ask the other to say it, is a violence, that pins the other to whatever that actual reality is said to be. For Foucault it is better to understand the other's difference as identifiable only in a temporal, temporary, tentative sense.

Of course, I must distinguish here between what Irigaray says she is doing - that she is not giving us the truth of woman - and the effects of her work. There
is, I am suggesting, a gap between her intent and the consequences of what she says. Irigaray employs a 'double fold', whereby:

One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to thwart it. ... to play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself ... to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effect of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible (Irigaray 1985:76).

But the question remains, how successful is this argument in its effects? I will continue to discuss these, but first, a brief aside to consider the concept of identity in a little more depth.

It is possible that, in her use of phenomenology, Irigaray retains the extra-worldly 'I' that Foucault has been at such pains to eliminate. If this is the case, and I can do no more than raise the question here, then the identity Irigaray posits for woman remains more closely related than she claims to the Hegelian form of identity, which, on the basis of the self-constituted 'I', creates itself in opposition to difference. The Hegelian identity 'posits that otherness with respect to which the identical pulls itself together from itself and upon itself' (Nancy 1993:10). How different is Irigaray's form of identity? It seems to me that, although Irigaray seeks to posit a difference that stands alone, her thought may remain enmeshed within a similar comparative framework through her retention of a consciousness that is removed from the world in its contemplation of experience.2

Whether this is so or not - that is, quite apart from a possible problem of an extra-worldly 'I' - I contend that the strategy of sexual difference unnecessarily involves itself in the problems that categorical thought brings. The question

1. On Irigaray's use of phenomenology see Whitford 1991:54-5. While Whitford is clear that Irigaray avoids the intentionality of Sartre's subject, I have not been able to decipher how she avoids the intentional 'I' of the phenomenological subject, with which Merleau-Ponty wrestled unsuccessfully (see my chapter three, note 6). Foucault had criticised phenomenology for this inability to dispose of the 'I'. In his study of Foucault, Deleuze explains this problem as a 'psychologism that synthesises consciousness and significations, a naturalism of the 'savage experience' and of the thing' (1988:108). Foucault himself says of this that rather than the 'truth of a world [opened] to us by means of our cognition' we should ask 'Does man really exist?' (OT:322). Phenomenology, he says, merely fabricates 'a subject that evolves through the course of history', remaining 'transcendental in relation to the field of events'. What is needed instead is genealogy: 'an analysis which can account for the constitution of the subject [man] within a historical framework' (PK:117).

2. On the difference between Foucault and phenomenology see Deleuze 1988:108-11. Although I cannot take this up in depth here, it is interesting that Deleuze says that for Foucault, 'Everything is knowledge, and this is the first reason why there is no 'savage experience': there is nothing beneath or prior to knowledge' (1988:109).
Spivak asks above, 'how is the essence being used?' is relevant here, especially if it is understood to ask what are the effects of that strategy. While Irigaray intends to establish a pure difference, her thought not only carries its own trace of categorisation, and of pinning us to our sex, but it can be taken up and used quite otherwise. The danger, of course, is that the strategy will backfire, and invite the very categorisation that we seek to escape, leaving the feminine even more firmly in the excluded position of the other. My contention is that it is inappropriate to risk stressing sexual identity when we have other more satisfactory and less risky means of knowing who we are, through genealogy and aesthetics of the self.

Irigaray can be interpreted as carrying out a strategic reversal of the 'saming' of the feminine, as Schor argues when she says that:

Since othering and saming conspire in the oppression of women, the workings of both processes need to be exposed. ... just as Beauvoir's analysis precludes theorizing difference, or rather ... difference as positivity, Irigaray's proves incapable of not theorizing difference, that is difference as positivity. ... What I am suggesting here is that each position has its inescapable logic, and that inescapability is the law of the same/other' (1988:46).

In saying this, Schor confines Irigaray to the other\same logic, and to a strategy of reversal. I agree with Foucault, who doubts 'whether the [meagre] logic of contradiction can actually serve as a principle of intelligibility and rule of action in political struggle' (PK:143). As Schor explains it, the notion of irreducible difference, as expressed by Irigaray in her call for 'the model of the two' sexed subjects (1995:11), is trapped in this logic of contradiction.

Against the emphasis of feminism of difference on representation, I cite Foucault who says that 'There is a technology of the constitution of the self that cuts across symbolic systems while using them' (1986a:369). Conceptually, then, woman is opposed to man, but feminine subjects are constituted through the strategic technologies of power. Foucault offers a new way of thinking about the construction of the self; we need not accept that identity as sexual difference is the only way of knowing who we are. The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity but to commit itself to its dissipation' (1977b:162). In other words, Foucault seeks to give us the freedom, not simply to reform the identity that has already been pinned to us, but to negotiate for ourselves what we will put in its place.
What is genealogy?

Here, to provide support to my argument for genealogy, I will briefly recount its main features. For Foucault, genealogy is a method of learning what we are through exposing how we have been constructed. It means inquiring into how we have been shaped within the boundaries of the knowledge and the historical truths which power has created in the time of our culture. This means that we can know who we are, not through pinning ourselves to our sex, but by methodically and exactly deciphering how we have become what we are.

As I explained in chapter three, Foucault gives a general account of the way that modern subjects have been shaped through the accumulated effects of the responses of various actors to historical events. He shows that, due largely to the needs of the rising middle class, industry and the state, modern forms of power have developed which discipline and shape individuals through acting upon the body's capacities for thought, emotion, desire and volition. The form of power that is most relevant to my discussion here is bio-power. This uses sexuality as an instrument in the disciplining of individuals and the management of populations, creating both in the form most suited to the needs of the dominant networks of power. In chapter four, I explained how sexuality was deployed as the instrument of a new technology, 'pastoral power', through which people have come to learn that 'the secret of their truth lies in the region of their sex' (Foucault PK:214).

Foucault believes that sexuality, as 'what is most material and most vital' in our bodies, has been at the heart of the great modern technologies of power, and consequently the modern forms of masculinity and femininity are the creations of these historically specific manoeuvres (HS:152; see also 103). Further, we are subjected through learning to look within for the vital truth of our selves. This 'confessional' practice, which seems to us so natural and given, is subjectifying because it composes a passive relation to self. Rather than actively practising an agonism in relation to self and searching out the truths we will live by, we have learned to look within for truth and self, and we are thus dominated by external forces.

As Foucault says, we have an alternative; through the study of the genealogy of sex, we can now understand that this 'is obviously only one of the given possibilities of organizing a consciousness of self' (Foucault 1989:330). Foucault's 'toolkit' does not fill in all of the details, and, in particular, leaves it to women themselves to develop an understanding of the particular ways that modern forms of power have affected and shaped them. Nevertheless, he is clear that it has been the deployment of the modern form of sexuality that has subjected
us. This deployment has given us to understand that our liberation and our identity is tied to sex:

It constitutes "sex" itself as something desirable. And it is this desirability of sex that attaches each one of us to the injunction to know it, to reveal its law and its power; it is this desirability that makes us think we are affirming the rights of our sex against all power, when in fact we are fasted to the deployment of sexuality that has lifted up from deep within us a sort of mirage in which we think we see ourselves reflected (HS:156-7).

As Foucault sees it, what has become of the deepest importance for both men and women is 'what was [once] perceived as an obscure and nameless urge' (HS:156). We now expect our intelligibility, the fullness of our lives, and our identity to be founded in sex. What is of deepest importance is not simply sexual acts, but the full expression of the self as a properly sexed being - that is as fully masculine or feminine. From Foucault's perspective, what subjects us is exactly what feminism of difference insists upon.

In this sense, the insistence upon sexual difference clashes in a fundamental way with Foucault's thought. How can we benefit from the considerable insights of both thinkers without radical inconsistency? My aim is to seek a way of using Irigaray in conjunction with Foucault.

**Comparing strategies**

Whitford argues that:

To provide definitions or theories would be to fall back into the metaphysics of the same, to define 'woman' as the 'other of the same'. Yet to remain on the negative side (always saying 'woman is not this') is to leave women 'homeless' in the symbolic order. There is a tension between the negative moment and the utopian future moment in which women will be for-themselves (1991:135-6).

But this does not really answer the objections that arise from the Foucaultian perspective. Genealogy does not say what woman is not. If we leave the realm of the symbolic (and the realm of values), we can utilise a far more straightforward and less universalising way of knowing what we are, by asking the question, "What are we today?" (Foucault 1988d:145).

Whitford says, further, that Irigaray is aware of the risks she takes, but that she argues that it is impossible to 'leap to the outside of phallogocentrism, nor any possible way to situate oneself there, that would result from the simple fact of being a woman' (Irigaray quoted by Whitford 1991:125). However, we can ask again, what is it in the question that produces this particular answer? Why do we
begin from the 'simple fact of being a woman'? Is it this that we should interrogate? From Foucault's perspective, the sex of the subject cannot be taken as given. Neither does he confine the problem to the issue of the representation of identity, as Irigaray tends to do, as indicated in the quotation above. Rather, the pertinent question to ask of a subject is how it came into existence - through what action upon its actions? For him, the problem from its inception is more far-reaching than identity: 'The problem is not changing people's consciousness - or what's in their heads - but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth' (PK:133).

If we decide to recognise ourselves through genealogy, then subversion through irony and mimicry can become one of the tools to be used. Our theory and practice is not then confined to addressing the fact that there is no 'outside' to the phallogocentric discourses that have represented the feminine. I have argued that Foucault's understanding of subjectivity as formed within the power relations that exist in the time of culture eliminates categorical thought and opens the possibility of differences existing in their own right. It means that we have a better means of understanding the specific historical forms of difference.

As I said in chapter four, rather than wanting to ignore or eliminate sexual difference, what Foucault wants ameliorated is 'that rigid assignation and pinning-down to [our] sex' that he sees as having been at the centre of our subjection in the modern era (Foucault PK:220). As he says,

We must not think that by saying yes to sex, one says no to power; on the contrary, one tracks along the course laid by the general deployment of sexuality. ... The rallying point for the counterattack against the deployment of sexuality ought not to be sex-desire, but bodies and pleasures (HS:157).

While feminists of difference may also see this, the charge that they, too, pin us to our sex cannot be lightly dismissed. As I have argued, feminism of difference places an inept emphasis upon sexual identity. In doing so, it risks complicity with the sexual subjection that Foucault has been at such pains to expose. It risks reinstating the very focus upon sexuality that Foucault has shown to be at the heart of our subjection today. Further, this is a process which means that the relation to the self remains unexamined, as a given, and we thereby lose an opportunity to change ourselves. Rather than seeing the self as something to be made, we are likely to continue to see it as something to be found. It is precisely this relation to self that Foucault wants us understand and to consider changing to a more active, positive relation.
As Foucault says, the discovery of essence involves a 'delicate sorting operation' (1977b:167). It is useless, he says, to attempt to reverse the opposition of true and false involved in essence 'by reinstating the rights of appearances, by ascribing to them a solidity and meaning, and bringing them closer to essential forms by lending them a conceptual backbone' (1977b:168). While some may argue that Irigaray is not precisely doing this, do we really want to take the risk of reinforcing the very sorting operations that are at the heart of the problem?

Foucault opens the possibility of transformation of the self in a way that feminism of difference may not, and yet his thought does not preclude us from identifying ourselves as 'women' - people with a certain kind of genealogy. Through genealogy, we can recognise ourselves in a way that does not involve comparison and yet gives the desired 'place from which women can speak as women' (Whitford 1991:124). This does not ask us to deny the particularities of our own histories. Nor does it ask us to deny the particularities of our own bodies, but rather to place the emphasis in constructing a strategy elsewhere.

Nevertheless, I am far from dismissing Irigaray's work. For example, she uses the word 'genealogy', quite differently from Foucault, but her understanding is also helpful to feminist objectives. Her use of it is closer to the usual sense - the recognition of one's ancestry. What she seeks is 'a female family tree', the restoration into presence of the disregarded chain of female ancestry. Her purpose, in particular, is to repair the break in the mother-daughter relationship, to strengthen a sense of female solidarity and identity (1993b:19; see also 130-31). This is an admirable strategy, and (apart from the minor problem of confusion over the different usages of 'genealogy') one that combines well with Foucault's aims. If Irigaray's work, apart from her insistence upon sexual difference, is combined with Foucault's genealogical perspective, then it offers us insights into how we have been constituted as what we are today. It also contains invaluable material that we could incorporate in hypomnemata, to use to make ourselves differently.

I have now completed my comparison of Foucault and feminism of difference. I have found unsatisfactory the way that feminism of difference utilises concepts of identity and representation that come uncomfortably and unnecessarily close to the humanist oppositional thought of the modern era. These are the tools of the form of power that has incarcerated us. I suggest that instead we need to look more closely at what we know, at what seems most familiar, and think it differently, to tell another, less costly, truth about ourselves. Rather than risking the familiar, we need to risk the unfamiliar. Because it questions these concepts
more fundamentally, I believe that Foucault's method of understanding how we have become what we are is a superior way of saying/knowing the truth about ourselves today. I will turn shortly to the second part of this chapter, to consider more positively what women need to take into account to make themselves differently.

Foucault suggests that in order to expand the limits of our freedom, and to create ourselves as ethical subjects, we assess our actions according to principles that we have chosen reflectively. However, as Irigaray and many other feminists say, women have good reason to be suspicious of the available thought and knowledge within which they are to create this new, less costly truth of themselves. On what basis are they to choose their principles? To deliberate upon this, I will begin the next section by stepping back a little, to review briefly the way that humanism has conceived of subjects and ethics, and what this has cost women. Then, to begin to throw some positive light upon how we might make our freedom, I will turn to Heidegger, who is one of Foucault's acknowledged predecessors, and much of whose thought is implicit, but not always easily accessible, in Foucault's work. I read Heidegger as a complement to and reinforcement of Foucault, to heighten and sharpen our understanding of what it is that women might seek in making themselves differently.

**Making Ourselves Differently**

*The Costs of humanism and the opening of other possibilities*

Sartre said that individuals should accept their freedom and with it their responsibility for their own situation and that of others. People have a duty not only to admit that the choices they make are entirely their own, but also to bring others to the same recognition. 3 His difference from Foucault is not the idea that the practice of freedom brings into being an ethical relation to self and to others, or even the belief that the more people put freedom into practice the better for all. Rather, it lies in the particular way that Sartre conceives of the separate components of these beliefs - what he means by freedom, the individual, the other, and morality.

For the Sartre of *Being and Nothingness*, freedom is absolute, intrinsic to the individual; the subject is unchanging, timeless; and the other is (potentially) the

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3. Sartre makes this explicit in 'Existentialism is a humanism', but it is implicit in *Being and Nothingness* (for discussion see Anderson 1989:63-5). Beauvoir's moral urging and her efforts to 'convert' women are also obvious in *The Second Sex*. 

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Same. For him, the truth of being is grounded in the fissure between mind and body at the heart of consciousness. Ethics is founded on this notion of Man as founding Subject, capable of transcending the given. As we saw in the case of The Second Sex, these formulations are incompatible with the interdependency, difference, and immanence that constitutes the feminine, which must, therefore, be renounced if women are to become present as subjects. It is this unthought at the heart of Sartre's thought, the extra-worldly consciousness, that depends upon the exclusion of the feminine and inaugurates the violence that women are subjected to in the negation of their difference.

As I explained in chapter three, the feminine belongs in the realm of the unthought, the taken for granted, as a condition of possibility of the modern forms of knowledge and rationality. Since the knowing subject is historically masculine, the feminine is an object and other of science. For Foucault, the modern forms of knowledge, the human sciences, are instruments of domination; it is within the limits of their truths that the modern subject is created, assesses itself, and is made compliant.

Sartre's philosophy is based upon categorical opposition, and therefore, upon valuation, which I will discuss further, below. I have argued that, even though intended to subvert the phallocentric discourses through irony and mimicry, the strategy of identity as sexual difference involves the risk of similar categorical opposition. If we stress the feminine, we risk valuing ourselves versus man, and thus a continuation of the violence. As I have argued, Foucault wants to step around the conception of subjectivity as identity, and the 'the play of affirmations and negations' involved in this. Like Heidegger, he would say that women must no longer allow their being to be subjected to the objectifying cost of validation. Foucault shows that such categorisation, the most assiduous method of subjecting difference, is an operation of power. I cited him on this in chapter three, but his view is of such consequence for feminism that it is worth repeating:

Categories organize the play of affirmations and negations, establish the legitimacy of resemblances within representation, and guarantee the objectivity and operation of concepts. They suppress the anarchy of difference, divide differences into zones, delimit their rights, and prescribe their task of specification with respect to individual beings. ... they appear as an archaic morality ... that the identical imposed upon difference. Difference can only be liberated through the invention of an acategorical thought (1977b:186).

4. In the later Notebooks for an Ethic, Sartre tries to break away from the moralising tone of his earlier work by distinguishing between obligation and values. He recognises that obligation opposes freedom by substituting the values of the Other for the values of the for-itself. Values, he believes, open on to freedom (see Juliette Simont 1992:182). But this leaves us with values, and as we have seen from Heidegger, this simply objectifies what is valued (see Heidegger 1977:228).
Foucault learned, perhaps from Heidegger, that the unthought must be explored and acknowledged in order that man's being can be understood in terms other than categories, and difference admitted to being in its own right, rather than being defined as the Other of identity. In a clear reference to Heidegger, he asked:

What, then, is the connection, the difficult link, between being and thought? What is man's being, and how can it be that being, which could so easily be characterized by the fact that 'it has thoughts' and is possibly alone in having them, has an ineradicable and fundamental relation to the unthought? A form of reflection is established far removed from both Cartesianism and Kantian analysis, a form that involves, for the first time, man's being in that dimension where thought addresses the unthought and articulates itself upon it (OT:325).

I discussed in chapter four the importance that Foucault places on thought as the means by which we can reflect upon our actions, and I will return to discuss it again, in the next section. But what is the other key term, 'being', that he relates it to? What does Heidegger mean by being? I cannot, of course, discuss the intricacies of this complex and exacting thinker in any depth here, but I believe even a slight consideration of his thinking offers a rare illumination of the question: What can we be? To simplify matters, I will begin by addressing two more specific questions: What does Heidegger mean when he says that valuing 'does not let things: be'? And what does he mean by 'dwelling'? For clarity in answering these, I will take up the two important aspects of being - time and space.

For Heidegger, man is a temporal being. Thus Being is to exist in time, with a past, a present and a future, and with the certainty of death before us. Heidegger believes that philosophy has been a 'metaphysics', in which being is conceived as 'permanence of presence', in which history is seen as unfolding before this permanent presence, and so Being, with its essential aspect of time, has been forgotten (has become the unthought).5 We forget that Being is for the time being, that it is being that unfolds before history, not the reverse. When we deny this, we no longer relate fully to ourselves or to others: 'Human existence can relate to beings only if it holds itself out in the nothing' (Heidegger 1977:111). In Foucault's terms, our capacities are limited, our freedom is restricted, difference is exiled, and our ethical relation to others is arrested, through the effects of our understanding of ourselves as outside of history.

This Being that we have 'forgotten', or more accurately, failed to think, occurs in the world through participation and involvement in present life; it is a being

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5. As I said in chapter two, metaphysics is a science that assumes what it seeks to explain. That is, it assumes man's existence as presence while trying to explain it.
that is open to Being. To claim it, we must recognise our finitude: 'Without the original revelation of the nothing, no selfhood, no freedom' (1977:106). In other words, 'To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal. It means to dwell', as Heidegger says in his essay 'Building Dwelling Thinking' (1977:325).

Space 'means a place cleared or freed for settlement and lodging. A space is something that has been made room for, something that is cleared and free, namely, within a boundary. ... that from which something begins its essential unfolding' (332). What unfolds is our lives, ourselves, our being-in-the-world. From Foucault's perspective, the nature of these bounded locations determines the nature of our being. It is these locations that 'shelter or house men's lives' (336). To build a house fit for human habitation, then, is to take the nature of human finitude, and the nature of the world into account. It is to dwell: 'To dwell, to be set at peace, means to remain at peace within the free, the preserve, the free sphere that safeguards each thing in its essence' (327).

To build a house, then, is to construct an ethos, a philosophy-as-life, a bounded space for thought. The house that Heidegger and Foucault want us to build permits us to be free by taking into account what we are, by letting ourselves 'dwell' in an understanding of what we are today, and, of course this is determined in terms of our finitude. 'The essence of building is letting dwell. ... Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build' (337-8). So, it is in the building of a space which allows dwelling as peace, as freedom, that we give ourselves the possibility of 'unfolding', of being at peace, of being free to 'be oneself' in Foucault's sense of making oneself, and give the same possibility to others. Against theories of signification, we dwell in the world, the world does not dwell in our minds (334). The dwelling we build, then, is how we live our philosophy in the world that is, how our philosophy has due regard for, or 'safeguards each thing in its [uniqueness]'?

Valuing, then, does not allow things to be free. It sets them in a space that restricts, not a space that is 'cleared and free', from which they can unfold. Valuing, bad or good, means to circumscribe, to objectify, to narrow the field of the other's actions. From this perspective of disallowing valuing, being means simply to be, without qualification of any kind.

It may be objected that one can value something 'in itself', without invidious comparison. I maintain, against this, that all valuing is comparison and that, to

6. Future references in this section thus: (106), refer to this essay, 'Building Dwelling Thinking'.
7. I have substituted 'uniqueness' for Heidegger's 'essence' to avoid the suggestion of a timeless quality and because 'uniqueness' also allows difference a presence as differences among and in, and not only between, distinctions that 'essence' tends to obscure. Foucault, in fact, ultimately disagreed with Heidegger's effort to find an original grounding in the essence of Being (1989:77).
make the distinction clear, a different term is needed to express this other meaning. To have an ethical regard for the other is not to value, but to pay attention to the other's Being, as it is in its own uniqueness, in one's thought.

So, I have discussed being, valuing and what kind of philosophy-as-life we will aspire to if we want to 'take care of ourselves'. Now I will return to ask: What is thinking? How are we to go about thinking differently, as Foucault recommends? Again, in order to enrich and clarify his concepts, I will turn to the thinkers I have invoked previously, Heidegger and Spinoza, who, along with Foucault, have devoted particular attention to thought and how we practise it. Here I will offer a brief guide to some aspects of their thinking that are relevant and inspirational to the enterprise of thinking ourselves differently.

**Thought and its practice**

Unfortunately, feminists cannot take for granted that their thought is automatically free from the unthought that has been at the heart of women's categorisation. In thinking an abode of our own we will, therefore, need all the help we can get from those thinkers who constantly carry on the difficult task of questioning what they know, of seeking and returning the unthought to presence. 'What is familiar is what we are used to; and what we are used to is the most difficult to know,' says Nietzsche (1974:355). And Heidegger, realising that valuing merely objectifies, wants to put 'in the place of the impoverished ethics of values a deeper thinking of the originary ethos' (Caputo 1989:55).

Like Foucault, Heidegger disagrees profoundly with Sartre's humanism. He believes that man is more than the rational Subject that Sartre presumes:

But the essence of man consists in his being more than merely human, if this is represented as "being a rational creature". ... The "more" means: more originally and therefore more essentially in terms of his essence. ... [Man] is more than animal rationale precisely to the extent that he is less bound up with man conceived from subjectivity. Man is not the lord of beings. Man is the shepherd of Being (Heidegger 1977:221).³

In saying that man is the shepherd of Being, Heidegger suggests that Being is prior to the conceptual - in other words, Being precedes man's self-presence and his transcendent activities. So, an "ontology" such as Sartre's:

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³ Future references in this section thus: (221), refer to this, the 'Letter on Humanism'.

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is subject to criticism, not because it thinks the Being of beings and thereby reduces Being to a concept, but because it does not think the truth of Being and so fails to recognize that there is a thinking more rigorous than the conceptual (235).

Heidegger is suggesting that Being exists in a worldly and temporal context, not in a consciousness or a thought process that is separate from the world. Yet thought is involved; he does not dismiss it. Thinking the truth of our being allows us to dwell. As he says:

Thinking builds upon the house of Being, the house in which the jointure of Being fatefully enjoins the essence of man to dwell in the truth of Being. This dwelling is the essence of "being-in-the-world" (236-7).

The thinking that is 'more rigorous than the conceptual', then, begins with recognising the finitude of human being and builds upon this a knowledge of its historical nature. This, our 'abode', the place where we can finally dwell truly in the world, is the ethos, the lived-philosophy, that recognises what we truly are. Caputo explains that for Heidegger, 'The truth of Being means the way a historical people settles into an understanding of the world, of the gods, of itself' (1989:56). But it means more than this; it means settling into an understanding of itself as unique, as historical.

Such thinking, says Heidegger, is simple, it is 'recollection of Being and nothing else. ... Such thinking has no result'. And yet it brings us to ethics: 'For it lets Being - be' (236). McNay's complaint that Foucault does not lay down guidelines is answered again: 'More essential than instituting rules is that man find his way to the abode of Being' (239). Only the thinking of ourselves differently from the way we do today, only the recognition of ourselves as transient beings allows difference into presence. Only this thinking 'is capable of supporting and obligating, ... offers a hold for all conduct' (238-9). "'Hold'"; he points out, 'means protective heed' (239). So, Heidegger concludes, 'What is needed in the present world crisis is less philosophy, but more attentiveness to thinking' (242).

Foucault has taken up Heidegger's understanding that Being precedes man's self-presence and his transcendent activities and that it exists in a temporal context. For him, we reach Heidegger's 'abode', for Foucault the place of freedom, when we recognise ourselves to be creatures of time, and when we understand exactly what our present time is:

if there is now an autonomous philosophical activity, ... then one could define it as a diagnostic activity. To diagnose the present is to say what the present is, and how our present is absolutely different from all that is not it, that is to say, from our past (Foucault 1989:38-9, my emphasis).
For Foucault the 'thinking [that] is more rigorous than the conceptual' is that thinking that shows how we have been made in the present time - that we are 'events', not essences. And it is this meticulous and exhaustive thinking of ourselves as products of the present that frees us.

How are women, though, to diagnose the present, when we have no past to differentiate it from? '[Women] have no past, no history ... of their own', says Beauvoir (SS:19). But this is only partly true. We do have a history that we can painstakingly uncover in order to see how we have been made. Through genealogical investigation, we can understand ourselves as particular beings of our time. We can understand how woman, the present version of the feminine, has come about, and how the beliefs that we call our own have come into being. (However, it is true, in another sense, that woman has a restricted relation to time, as I will explain below).

This understanding of ourselves as products of our history is not an identification versus the other; it avoids the essentialisation that ties us into the masculinist strategy of opposition and categorisation. Yet it gives us a certain unity for political purposes and it opens the way for change. Through genealogy, we can still recognise ourselves as women, understand our commonalities, as well as our differences.

This kind of singularity can be of its own accord, it does not need oppositions. We can recognise ourselves as a particular kind of being without being pinned to particular characteristics. Instead of letting us: be valid, genealogy lets us: be. It frees us from domination, allowing us to act upon our own actions, allows us to take possession of our power of acting. So, it opens the possibility of acting ourselves differently. By freeing our thought 'from what it silently thinks' (UP:9), it allows us to dwell in an abode of our own.

So, what kind of thinking do women need to practise if they want to take care of themselves? Heidegger would say that we need to think beyond concepts such as identity and value, that our ethos does not exist in conceptual thought, but in how we understand ourselves to be in the present world. Foucault would agree, and add that we need the courage to give up what we cling to, and to question what we know. This is the risk that is good for us, rather than the risk of repeating the same. To maintain our concept of who we are through the existing androcentric dualist structures is to be governed by the fear of chaos. Rather than closing ourselves off, seeing things through the narrow chinks of our prison, fearfully refusing to leave it, it is better for us to have the courage: to be. Being,

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9. As I noted in chapter four, feminist historians have already produced an impressive and heartening body of work.
dwelling in our historical home, gives a strength we can never have by proclaiming our virtues, identifying ourselves, asking to be accepted. We need to combine forces, argue, demand, to make our difference respected, but not to play the game whose rules have been 'designed' to make us unfree.

After disentangling our selves from the truths we have been given, we achieve a freedom of action that we did not previously possess. Then it becomes possible for us to act with discrimination upon our actions, to consciously select what criteria we will base our actions upon - in short, to become ethical subjects of our own conduct. Foucault believes that it will be good for us to do this - to imagine ourselves otherwise, to act, think, be for ourselves, and that being passive products of our history is bad for us. His suggestion that we invent ourselves as works of art links him back again to feminism of difference in its desire to create a positive self-authored feminine being.

I have been musing upon the kind of thought that can free us, concentrating on how we are to understand our being in relation to time. There is another aspect of our being that is not to be neglected. To understand our existence and our relations with others, we need to understand the nature of our embodied being. For Foucault, we are not constructed in the world as isolated individuals, and especially not as isolated consciousneses. Rather, we are dynamic and complex bodies in dynamic and complex relations with other bodies. For him bodies are always made in the world, and these are bodies that are specific to the time of their existence. Spinoza has paid particular attention to thought in relation to bodies, and so I turn to him for inspiration in the task of thinking ourselves differently.

For Spinoza, the more adequately we come to understand what kind of bodies we are, and what kinds of other bodies are, the better for us. For him, power is the movement of life. Moving bodies continually collide, enhancing or diminishing their activity, depending on how they affect each other. The more adequately we can think a common relationship with other bodies, the more we can compose another larger body, that is, a new relationship, and so increase our power, activity and joy. Adequate ideas, he says, bring activity, joy; inadequate ideas bring slowness, suffering. As Michael Hardt says, 'The heart of Spinozan politics ... is oriented toward the organization of social encounters so as to encourage useful and composable relationships' (1993:109-110). This thinking can be linked, too, to Heidegger: The more adequately we come to understand how we 'dwell', make our being in the world, the better for us all.

As Foucault would say, it is the inability of present-day thought to think difference that makes reciprocal, 'composable', relationships unrealisable. Within today's economy, he says, difference is specified as a unity, or a group. This
repetition of the same, is like 'counting sheep'. It is 'difference as specification ... and repetition as the indifference of individuals' (1977b:182). This 'subjection to common sense' is brought about by fear of chaos. Instead, he asks: What if we 'conceived of difference differentially, instead of searching out the common elements underlying difference?' (1977b:182). What if we see ourselves as historical events? Then repetition becomes the repetition of difference, 'a pure event'.

Making ourselves differently in time

In his archaeological thought, Foucault criticises humanism for its assumption that man is the universal Subject of history, as I explained in chapter three. In other words, he sees that humanist thought is built upon the particular relation that man conceives of himself as having to time. Now I want to respond to Foucault's understanding that man is created through his particular relation to time by asking where woman is placed in relation to time. Since Foucault's entire work was directed toward criticising humanist thought and to finding solutions to the problems that this concept of man produced, the question of the relation of man, woman and time is not peripheral but is directed toward a pivotal aspect of his work. So, the question of woman's place in time is in keeping with the theme of the second part of this chapter - considering what women might seek in place of the humanist regime that has confined them.

This exploration of the relation between man, woman and time is a particular way of looking at the problem of today. However, it is a primary approach of Foucault himself. In dealing with time I am addressing what Foucault understands to lie at the heart of the problem of what we are today. In the following section, then, I will be summarising what I have wanted to convey concerning what Foucault offers feminism.

Time and Being: Thinking the difference between the feminine and the masculine

Foucault, like Heidegger, is essentially concerned with time. Man, they both protest, conceives of himself unrealistically in relation to time. He thinks that it is he that remains stationary, observing and controlling events as they pass from past to future before his percipient gaze. The results of this conception, says Foucault, is the domination, destruction, violence, and annihilation of our era. But if man believes that it is his place to subject the movement of time to his gaze,
where is woman placed? It is unlikely that, as man's Other, she would occupy the same place as he does. If man defines himself through his relation to time, what of woman?

Beauvoir has given several indications that conceptions of time are involved in the relation between man and woman. Not only do men have a history, but they 'continually reach out towards other liberties' towards 'expansion into an indefinitely open future' (SS:28-9). Woman, she says, simply stagnates, repeats life. It is this disjunction of time as it relates to the masculine and the feminine that I want to explore in asking my final question: How might men and women relate differently?

**Time and sex: Conceptualising the problem**

For Foucault it is the conception of history as a progress from an essential origin that stifles difference. The origin is that 'primordial truth', that one, immutable totality, the uncovering of which provides the basis of knowledge. The concept of the 'origin makes possible a field of knowledge whose function is to recover it', as the site of truth (1977b:143). The search for the originary truth 'is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things'; it assumes that there is an original identity, a beginning of 'immobile forms' that 'precede the external world of accident and succession' (1977b:142). The result of this backward gaze is an exclusive preoccupation with truth, to which the subject of knowledge is sacrificed, says Foucault. The search for origin means that things must be sorted - truth from falsehood, essence from 'chimerical' appearance - and so the long chain of identification and the sacrifices it entails is begun. So, says Foucault, 'the instinct for knowledge is malicious. ... [The development of knowledge] is not tied to the constitution and affirmation of a free subject; rather it creates a progressive enslavement to its instinctive violence' (1977b:163).

An important exclusion in this pursuit of truth is the body, that which exists only in the present. Truth requires the 'objectivity' of an always identical, that is, timeless, consciousness which cannot, therefore be tied to a finite and affective body. 'The demagogue denies the body in order to secure the sovereignty of a timeless idea' (Foucault 1977b:158). The historian, the double of the demagogue, denies his independent perspective, and adopts the disembodied, timeless, universal perspective, to 'disclose the form of an eternal will' (1977b:158). It is not, then, only the sorting into categories and the valuing that is 'malicious', it is the denial of present embodied life in the interests of an 'objective' thought that believes in 'in final causes and teleology' (1977b:158).
'The injustice proper to the will to knowledge' destroys 'the affirmative and creative powers of life', says Foucault (1977b:164). But even though he protests this destruction of present life caused by the exclusion of the present and the search for truth in the origin, Foucault does not identify woman with present time. This is not surprising, since, until his final work, he rarely considered the feminine. However, the insertion of woman into the mundane present is supported by an abundance of evidence, and in particular by the thought of Beauvoir and Sartre. Beauvoir understands that 'giving birth and suckling are not activities, they are natural functions; no project is involved ... [they provide] no reason for lofty affirmation of her existence', while 'domestic labours ... imprisoned her in repetition and immanence ... they produced nothing new' (SS:94-5). It is consistent, too, with the Sartre of Being and Nothingness in his horror of slime: 'The horror of the slimy is the horrible fear that time might become slimy, that facticity might progress continually and insensibly and absorb the For-itself' (BN:778). Clearly, transcendence involves transcendence in time: 'There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future', says Beauvoir (SS:29). It is not, then, unreasonable to find that the feminine is excluded from the masculine structure of time. Symbolically, woman is all that lives only in present time and cannot be made to reach into past and future through involvement in a transcendent consciousness.

Immanence is that which exists in the present: The philosophy of history 'treats the present as framed by the past and future' (Foucault 1977b:176). How well we can recognise Sartre in the patriarchal teleology, which:

links transcendence to a future understood as a goal or a purpose. ... it is this linking that allows transcendence to dominate the immanence of presence; that is, once transcendence is understood as the yet-to-be-realized purpose of the present, the present becomes the mere instrument of the times which it is not (Bergoffen 1989:85-6).

This patriarchal historicism, then, defines creativity as that which creates the future, but in doing so annihilates re-creation, the making of the present life, which becomes the given, or the unthought. In other words, the notion of transcendence severs the relationship between the feminine re-creation and the masculine creation. Thus the repetition that woman carries out in present time, rather than being seen as life-creating, is reduced to 'mere redundancy' (Bergoffen 1989:83). Woman, excluded from man's history, 'has no history of her own', she simply repeats her work in time, re-creating the potential life that man, meanwhile, is occupied with annihilating. The different relation to time, then, is an important aspect of the lack of reciprocal regard that exists in the relation between man and woman.
**Time-as-lived**

In reflecting upon how we are to become authors of our own conduct, we need to understand how we have been made, so that we are able to determine on what basis we will make ourselves and our lives. In considering how man and woman conceive of themselves differently in time, I want to make accessible one aspect of the feminine that women may want to take into account in deciding what their own rules of conduct are to be founded upon. In other words, I am offering material that may be collected into the hypomnemata which can be referred to in deciding how we want to make, to change, ourselves and our lives.

Man's conception of his relation to time and the positioning of woman in the disregarded present time translate into a different ethos, 'the deportment and the way to behave' for each sex (Foucault 1988:6). Male and female 'are required to live time differently' (Bergoffen 1989:79-80). The masculine is conceived within the temporal expanse of history: progress, production, transcendence, creating the new, linking past to future - and many men's lives conform largely to this conception. A properly masculine man devotes his life to 'productive' work. The feminine is conceived in the fleeting time of re-production, repeating the same in the present, and a properly feminine woman is concerned with these repetitive activities. In this dichotomous conceptualisation, the masculine activity spans time, makes significant things happen; the feminine activity is ephemeral, of lesser significance, it is the given that simply joins past to future.

Of course real men and women do not necessarily live these conceptions, or even conform to them in their thought. Many women, for example, consider themselves the same as men, and adopt masculinist concepts. Nevertheless, the lack of regard for present time in the dominant masculinist thought continues to have the violent effects that Foucault describes. Both men and women suffer the ill effects of a system which negates present time.

The ramifications extend far beyond the specific feminist problem. The valuing and objectifying it entails is extended to all of those others who do not, or cannot, participate in the valued masculine time of 'productive' labour. In this sense, Iris Young is correct to say that 'oppressed people', such as the unemployed, are 'inhibited' if we understand this to mean that they are relegated to the 'unproductive' time zone of the present. But so are we all, workers and non-workers, men and women, 'immobilized and reduced' in our possibilities through this unthought of time, which, as Foucault says destroys 'the affirmative and creative powers of life'.

As Heidegger would say, the failure to think mindfully our Being in time means that we do not dwell but merely subsist, poorly housed and impoverished,
until we die without having lived fully. Through man's forgetting that 'To be a human being means to be on the earth as a mortal' (1977:325), present life is negated. So, in his terms, woman is given the labour of producing life, but the life she produces is not allowed to Be in the time of the present. Instead it is slotted into masculinist time, and is thrust into the future of profits, and into the wars that make future benefits. Foucault is fully aware that the violence he speaks of is not merely the affront caused by the 'sorting', the categorising, that results from man's relation to time, and the search for truth. The violence is inflicted upon real bodies, not only in the form of language and exclusion, but in the form of modern wars and holocausts on a totally unprecedented scale. This has occurred, says Foucault, because 'power is situated and exercised at the level of life' (SS:137). '[M]odern man,' he says, 'is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question' (HS:143). Present life is administered and optimised in the name of survival into the future: 'The principle underlying the tactics of battle - that one has to be capable of killing in order to go on living - has become the strategy of states' (HS:137). Similarly, as Marx shows, present living bodies are sacrificed to production of future capital. Foucault takes this into account when he speaks of the modern development of a power over life that 'centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimisation of its capabilities, the extortion of its forces' (HS:139).

In terms of realising the potential of our affirmative and creative powers, the future never becomes the present. In the masculine temporality, the present life, of Being, is forfeited. Appropriating Spinoza again, we can say that the inadequacy of our thinking of our existence in time reduces our capacity for wider relationships that enhance our activity, our life, our joy. In Foucault's terms, man's failure to recognise himself as an 'event' means that pure difference cannot be admitted to thought. Woman, meanwhile, lives in the zone of the unthought time of the present - she is conceived in terms of the temporary event, excluded and deprecated.

The problem will be solved only through a radical thinking of the unthought which brings it into presence, and the consequent rejection of the sexed zoning of time. As Foucault would say, time must be thought univocally. The present life in all of its mundanity, the bodies and pleasures, the babies, the cakes and the flowers, the clean clothes and the polished floors, the feminine itself, are not to be judged, valued and excluded from presence in thought. To solve this problem we need to think more fundamentally, to relentlessly question the unthought of our thought.
How are present, past and future to be reconciled? Obviously, the aim is not to live life entirely in the present, with no connection with past or future. From the past we can learn what the present is, in the present we must live, and for the life of the future we must have due regard. As Bergoffen says, ‘the human adult must cultivate an affirmation of life through the proper cultivation of memory and forgetfulness’ (1989:84). The need for production for the future must be united with the needs of present life; neither must be sacrificed. That is, while we must attend to the prudent activity that sees to the preservation of life in the future, we must simultaneously care for the life of present human beings. Further, the past is also important since caring for ourselves means knowing what the present is, through genealogical study of our past.

To think time differently, firstly we need to reconsider the question of origin: 'What is found at the historical beginning of things is not the inviolable identity of their origin; it is the dissension of other things. It is disparity', says Foucault (1977b:142). What is needed is the restoration of disparity, which will 'dispel the chimeras of the origin' and bring difference into presence (1977b:144). In other words, we need to think of time itself not as a continuous evolution from this origin, but as 'disconnected' events. History, in that case, is no longer a matter of progress, no longer a matter of sorting, no longer a matter of essence or identity, no longer a matter of oppositions, and no longer a matter of excluding difference. For Foucault, as for Heidegger, the present moment is that time when past and future collide, the time of singular events. An understanding of our being as the repetition of difference is something that is 'accessible only from within the temporal, only through reflection upon our own being in time' (Lloyd 1993:114). This is very close to Foucault, who urges us to understand ourselves as unique 'events' in time. When we understand this, our uniqueness in time, we begin to understand how we can change the present - ourselves and our world.

The solution to woman's exclusion, then, is that history must become a genealogy, a history of the present time that includes memory and imagination as a presence within it. Feminine repetition can then be seen as variation, variation as creativity, or as Foucault's repetition of difference:

Within the structure of the eternal return, the antithesis between the creative and the re-creative is negated. Rather than confronting each other as antagonistic partners in a master-slave dialectic, the meanings of the productive and reproductive are allowed to play into and enrich each other as both male and female are enticed to pursue the genealogical affirmation of the human life of memory-cultivated presence (Bergoffen 1989:86).
Finally, there exists the possibility of conceiving of a human being that is unique to its time, and is conceived as immediately what it is. The possibilities that emerge from such a rethinking of our ethos are far-reaching. If we achieve this, we will have thought Being, as Heidegger wishes, and the possibility of dwelling at peace in the present will exist. We will have a present space in which our lives, our being-in-the-world, can unfold without being sacrificed to the future. We can have regard for the future of life while caring for ourselves in the present.

For Foucault, 'Being is the recurrence of difference' (1977b:187). Being is the recurrence of the event, it is to focus one's attention upon the time of the present. It is in these terms that I wish to interpret his frequent suggestion that we turn from an economy of sex to one of 'bodies and pleasures'. As he says, '[Genealogy's] task is to expose a body totally imprinted by history and the process of history's destruction of the body' (1977b:148). By this I understand him to mean that it is 'the very movement of life' which is sacrificed by the humanist understanding of history as a search for truth (1977b:164). From this understanding that difference exists in the present, and that humanism is destructive of life, I conclude that we need not only to disinvest sexuality of its power as the source of truth about the self. His choice of bodies and pleasures is not simply the 'rallying point for the counter-attack against the deployment of sexuality', but also proposes to make present life the focus of our attention. The turn to bodies and pleasures is not meant to convey the idea of a life of orgiastic pleasure, but rather the view that life is to be respected. This is why Beauvoir is mistaken to sneer at the minor joys of cakes and flowers, polished floors and home-cooked meals, for things such as these are banal but important aspects of our ethical life, manifesting our heedfulness and care for ourselves and others.

When men and women understand their sexed relation to time and grasp their own genealogies, what then? Irigaray believes that when 'the two different genders are affirmed', men and women will perhaps 'be communicating for the first time' (1993b:120). I say that if we develop a lived-philosophy that conceives of history as the history of the present and of ourselves as unique events in time, then the present concept of the human will be different. Man as we know him will disappear, and with him will go the particular problems that he has brought. Woman then will have a different being in time, and so will be different herself. Foucault would probably say no more. He is 'reluctant to make assessments about the type of culture that may be in store. Everything is present, you see, ... inside a given culture' (1988:45). He certainly would not predict a utopia. Rather we can expect 'everything' to be always 'dangerous' (1986a:343).
Conclusion: Making Our Freedom

It is understandable that Daniel O'Hara takes a gloomy view of Foucault's future use in his derisive essay, 'Why Foucault no longer matters'. O'Hara despairs of our ability to understand and respond to Foucault's work on the relation to self 'with imaginative and critical appreciation' (1994:158, n.32). It is true there is reason for gloom. 'If to convert oneself is to turn away from the preoccupations of the external world, from the concerns of ambition, from fear of the future' (Foucault CS:65), then perhaps this is not a time favourable to the possibility of conversion to Foucault's way of thinking differently. The lack of concern for present life seems ever more widespread and apparent, in the rush into the future exhibited by the impetus for increased production and ever more sophisticated means of defence.

Foucault wrote in response to a century of unprecedented violence, the violence that comes from the conception that present life must be sacrificed to the future. Towards the end of his life, however, he was optimistic: 'But everything isn't going badly', he said (1988a:329). It is noteworthy that he mentions 'the concerns of ambition' and 'fear of the future' in the same breath. This is because they are similarly life-denying. He did not believe that those who adopted this new way of looking at, and being in, the world, felt 'the need to lament that the world is in error ... and that it is time for others to keep quiet so that at last the sound of their disapproval may be heard' (1988a:330). Instead, he invoked curiosity:

Curiosity is seen as futility. However, I like the word; it suggests something quite different to me. It evokes "care"; it evokes the care one takes of what exists and what might exist; a sharpened sense of reality, but one that is never immobilized before it, a readiness to find what surrounds us strange and odd; a certain determination to throw off the familiar ways of thought and to look at the same thing in a different way; a passion for seizing what is happening now and what is disappearing; a lack of respect for the traditional hierarchies of what is important and fundamental (1988a:328).

Still, he said, 'the bread is on the shelf' (much remains to be done) (1989:314). Clearly optimism does not mean being care-less of the future. Rather it means an active involvement in the world that we make for ourselves. So, it is for us now to

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10. There is reason for hope in the growing number of feminists who read Foucault with generosity and understanding, and who recognise how feminist insights can be added to his, to the benefit of both projects. These include Judith Still (1994), Kath Renark Jones (1994), Cristina de Peretti (1994), Diane Rubenstein (1988), Susan Hekman (1990:179-88), Elspeth Probyn (1993:109-37), but this is a far from exhaustive list. Ann Laura Stoler's *Race and the Education of Desire* must be included as a serious engagement with Foucault's project from the colonial point of view.
decide what is to be done. What do we need to do to care for ourselves? Foucault has placed the bread on the table for us, and it is for us to slice it.

Who will take up the possibility of changing our existence that Foucault has offered us? It is tempting to say that women are particularly well suited to do so, but this would not be true. Men, too, are concerned to 'interrogate' that particular regime of truth under which we have lived and died for too long' (Bernauer 1990:183), as Foucault himself has shown. It is tempting, again, to think that, nevertheless, those who suffer more obviously under that regime have more reason to subvert it. But who is to say the kinds and manners of suffering that are experienced through the imposition of this regime of truth? Despite the fact that Foucault believes that sexuality lies at the heart of our present subjection, it would be highly inappropriate to use sexuality, or sex, as a method of sorting who is, and who is not, suited to the invaluable work of subversion. This, too, is why we turn to bodies and pleasures. While sex divides, and in its divisions conquers, the turn to bodies and pleasures means to care for life in all its many aspects.

Foucault is a philosopher of freedom. Above all, the practice of freedom is an ethics. The challenge he presents to us is the suggestion that the ethical approach to our thought is to question our deepest, most cherished beliefs. For him, the ultimate question is not what we authentically are but what we can be. He does not want us to practise self-renunciation; rather he wants us to adopt the practice of freedom. The ethical life entails having a concern for ourselves, a caring for ourselves that is not an egoism but an exercise in grace and courage. To get free of the self and to change the self means not an act of will, but the difficult task of giving a form to one's conduct and one's life. It means an agonism of constant thought and exercise in negotiating an ethos, which is a 'practice of self and of freedom' (1988:19).
### Abbreviations

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<th>EA</th>
<th>Beauvoir:</th>
<th><em>The Ethics of Ambiguity</em></th>
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<td>SS</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>The Second Sex</em></td>
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<td>BN</td>
<td>Sartre:</td>
<td><em>Being and Nothingness</em></td>
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<td>CS</td>
<td>Foucault:</td>
<td><em>Care of the Self</em></td>
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<td>DP</td>
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<td><em>Discipline and Punish</em></td>
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<td>HS</td>
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<td><em>The History of Sexuality, Vol. I</em></td>
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<td>PK</td>
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<td>OT</td>
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<td>UP</td>
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<td><em>The Use of Pleasure</em></td>
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