

THE POLITICAL ROLE OF THE BODY

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ABSTRACT: How should we conceive of the female body in the context of a patriarchal society in which woman is dominated by male authority? Simone de Beauvoir's analysis in *The Second Sex* provides an answer to this question: namely, that the female body is an instrument capable of asserting and determining "her being" in the world, with an awareness of the dominance of man. Therefore, the body is to be analysed as a social factor of discrimination, in which the difference between the genders ascribes a political discrepancy which can attend the legal status of the body.

Keywords: body, woman, legitimisation, slave, phenomenology

This contribution centres on the notion of the body in Simone de Beauvoir and the rules for its perception: these determine the nexus "being-otherness", which, because of the difference between the genders, becomes important on a political level.

Her re-evaluation offers a possibility for giving form to woman's desire without male mediation, so that the body, through awareness of men and women, can recognize both as subjects, where, at least, the reciprocity of their relationship will not be abolished by the miracle of two different classes of genders. That's why the political form of a woman's body should be singularized to obtain one reciprocal alterity. Thus, 1) first, I will demonstrate how the body has always been connected to reality, so that it works as a discriminating *social* factor, even at times for the same womanly functions. If, in fact, a sexual discrepancy can be ascribed to men and women in their way of existence and co-existence—the nit is the body which takes the shape of a destiny—then it is a priority for woman to obtain a universal view of her body that is able to exceed a different quality of human experience to establish a reality which crosses biological difference.

This implies 2) exploring the nature of the female body and its inter-subjective dimension; therefore, we must also look at the influence that the difference between the sexes has on the relationship that a woman

entertains with "her" world. We will discover the political role of the body that makes the decrease of the gender difference impossible due to quality and propriety values that are historically sedimented. That's why the same concept of female emancipation and the creation of an independent sense of herself can produce a new system in the political reality. The biological feature of woman allows the realisation of a society in which the difference between sexual bodies acquires a universal access that establishes the different experiences of the human being. Although there is also a certain sense of belonging concerning the female body, it is nevertheless "naturally" associated with the procreation of the species. So, I will illustrate 3) the precarious balance woman must experience when she has to arrange her needs with those of the species in general. This implies an analysis of the social implications of the natural difference between the sexes and an objective analysis of woman's role in society, assuming that neither she nor society has any need to reproduce. The result will be a transcendental concept of freedom that could also be interpreted as the creation of social reality.

1. The connection between the female body and reality: A new way to re-determine society?

The relation between the female body and reality, between her biological constitution and her freedom in the world as an independent existent, isn't often recognized. Nowadays the condition of woman seems to be the biological termini which defines her as "*tota mulier in utero*",¹ or just an incubator used to carry a pregnancy to ensure the species' continuation. The consequence of the condition for which the female body is intended—namely, her womb—must be forgotten to appreciate what she *really* is, specifically, her individuality as an independent subject to male dominance, capable of affirming herself—despite her

¹ Beauvoir, Simone de, and H. M. Parshley. *The second sex / by Simone de Beauvoir. Transl. and ed. by H. M. Parshley.* n.p.: New York Knopf, 1965. 13. – Further: De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*.

biological connotation in modern society. Despite this, her individuality and her subjectivity get lost any time her body is considered from a purely biological point of view: the consequence of this physical consideration of the female body is her objectification and subjugation to male authority. Nevertheless, if a phenomenological perspective is applied to the living sexual body—which implies an analysis of the *phenomena* relating to it, like the sociality of gender and the sexual discrepancy which emerges from the different biological connotations—then it is possible to break the asymmetrical relation between the sexes, namely, the objectification of the female body and its domination by the male. This relation has an ontological basis because it refers to the *essential* difference between the genders, which is based on this duality between subjugation by the male and objectification of the female. This correlation typifies patriarchal society, where the objectification of the woman *le chair* is reported as opposed to the subjective activity of the male—namely, the *corps*.² Given this “value” for this phenomenon of gender difference, it is possible to look at what these sexual aspects mean, regarding the interrelation that everybody establishes with other bodies and the world.³

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) offers a very important perspective on this subject. In this book, she develops a theory which seeks to escape the biological reductionism which is supposed by this kind of society and which treats the female body just as a biological data. Through a very long examination, which is based on de Beauvoir's consideration of the possible reasons for woman's subordination to man (these being, from her point of view, the biological, historical, material, and psychoanalytic, which are each rejected by her),⁴ she achieves the outcome of the structural

obstacle for female independence and the norms of society. According to de Beauvoir, these laws are assigned to transcendence. If woman's transcendence cannot be realized, because of the structural power which created the relationship between the genders through which woman lost her individuality and has been made subordinate and inferior to man, then this subjugation is also reflected in that it dooms her immanence to inferiority. If this is the case, then “her condition has remained the same through superficial changes, and it is this condition that determines what is called the 'character' of woman: she 'revels in immanence', she is contrary, she is prudent and petty, she has no sense of fact or accuracy, she lacks morality, she is contemptibly utilitarian, she is false, theatrical, self-seeking, and so on.”⁵

For this reason, only if this law preserves an ontological basis can woman reach being through force of will.⁶ This question has obviously created different kinds of problems concerning transcendence. First of all, it refers to de Beauvoir's equivocations with ontology. In this respect, it might be that the relation of the body to the world shouldn't be considered as a *brute fact*; rather, the body expresses “our relation with the world, and it is why it is an object of sympathy or repulsion.”⁷ Another question concerning transcendence is that regarding its role, because it has occupied almost two different positions in philosophy. In this regard, Nadine Changfoot observes that “first the subject of transcendence is an agent of her and her becoming. This resonates with a more liberal conception of freedom where a subject is presumed autonomous from the outset and makes the most rational decision possible for her/his happiness [...] Second transcendence is a matter

ontology'. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 2009, 35. Jg., Nr. 4, 394.

⁵ De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, tr. Citadel Press, 1948, 587.

⁶ Changfoot, Nadine. 'Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: Revisiting masculinist ontology'. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 395.

⁷ De Beauvoir, Simone. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, tr. Citadel Press, 1948, 17.

² Cf. Tiukalo, Alicja. 'The notion of the body and sex in Simone de Beauvoir's philosophy'. *Human Movement*, 1 March 2012, Vol.13(1), 79.

³ Heinämaa, Sara. 'Simone de Beauvoir's phenomenology of sexual difference'. *Hypatia*, 1999, 14. Jg., Nr. 4, 119.

⁴ Cf. Changfoot, Nadine. 'Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*: Revisiting masculinist

of relational freedom whose actualization shifts according to the differences of the subjects in question.”⁸ De Beauvoir conceived that this concept was misread by patriarchal society, which is moreover inscribed on the sexed body. This misreading has developed into a violence which marks the male body as powerful, so that the female body covers itself from immanence.⁹ This consequence of transcendence was criticised by feminists in the 1970s because, from their point of view, transcendence depends on ontology. De Beauvoir was accused of privileging value, which appertains to masculine society. Instead, the male is considered—also with a critical perspective—superior to woman. The consequence of this consideration is that the individual doctrine of authenticity, which connotes woman, was dismissed.¹⁰

But Simone de Beauvoir had a solution to this kind of society: namely, to restore female subjectivity as producing social process,¹¹ which involves her entire existence. So, from this perspective, female anatomy isn’t considered destiny; instead, biology can explain what woman represents in her social environment. De Beauvoir’s solution is to consider the woman in her *overall* social context. Following her analysis, I have already used, in relation to the female body, two expressions—‘biological’ and ‘society’—to make clear

how their application prior to the twentieth century is problematic. This is because these two words, which connote the female body, imply that it can be used like an instrument, and enshrine discrimination between the genders. Interestingly, they are used every time that there is a political or economic dependence or a social dependence, which creates a subordinated/hierarchical relationship between female and male. Moreover, it must be recognized that, according to the defenders of patriarchal society, these differences between the genders exist because of biological differences, and has as an effect the oppression of woman by man.

An interesting consequence of this phenomenon—even considering the physical body as responsible for woman’s constitution—is her *enslavement*, wherein two traits have to be recognized: that the woman’s “grasp upon the world is less extended than man’s, and she is more closely enslaved in her species.”¹² For sure, this *enslavement* regards what de Beauvoir attributed to patriarchal society, where the female body becomes the shape of destiny capable of entirely influencing her existence, where she ends up being enslaved by male authority. According to de Beauvoir, this phenomenon appeared once slavery occurred in history—namely, when man “has recourse to the labour of other man, whom he reduces in slavery. Private property appears: master of slaves and of the earth, man becomes the proprietor also of woman.”¹³ Hence the question turns on what the *property* of other men means. If we focus on the word ‘property’, which comes from the Latin ‘*dominium*’, then it is possible to discover that the word ‘*dominium*’ is used every time there is the practice of slavery. The explanation that Luis de Molina gives in *De iustitia et iure* (1588) to the *dominium paternum* could clarify what kind of property is related to *dominium*: exactly that property that man exercises over woman. According to Molina, it is recognizable as the power that a married man exercises over his wife, his children, and his servants, as a “natural”

⁸ Changfoot, Nadine. ‘Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex: Revisiting masculinist ontology*’. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 392.

⁹ Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 573. “If she seems to man so ‘physic-al’ a creature, it is because her situation leads her to attach extreme importance to her animal nature. The call of the flesh is no louder in her than in the male, but she catches its least murmurs and amplifies them. Sexual pleasure, like rending pain, represents the stunning triumph of the immediate; in the violence of the instant, the future and the universe are denied; what lies outside the carnal flame is nothing; for the brief moment of this apotheosis, woman is no longer mutilated and frustrated.”

¹⁰ Changfoot, Nadine. ‘Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex: Revisiting masculinist ontology*’. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 393.

¹¹ Hughes, Alex; Witz, Anne. ‘Feminism and the matter of bodies: from de Beauvoir to Butler’. *Body & Society*, 1997, 3. Jg., Nr. 1, 48.

¹² Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 79.

¹³ Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 80.

institution. This *dominium* is a kind of power which can be considered prior to the state and all that concerns the division of property.¹⁴ In his book *Recht* (2016), Matthias Kaufmann points out that the word *dominium* can have different variations depending on the context in which it is used: it can indicate “exerted dominance” and “property”, depending on the argument to be carried out.¹⁵ In *The Second Sex*, it is possible to find out the kind of *dominium* which regards property, in order that woman embodies the qualities of mother and becomes the property of man. This is something that appears, for example, in Oriental society: the female body “is not perceived as a radiation of a subjective personality, but a thing sunk deeply in its own immanence.”¹⁶ This characteristic of *dominium*, which is exercised by male authority over woman, happens every time that there is the phenomenon of woman’s enslavement to the human species. In addition, de Beauvoir recognizes the restriction to domestic duties as pure domination by man.¹⁷ Standing out from here is the principle of patriarchal society, which is based on private property. In this kind of society, woman is subjugated to man: she depends on his sexual caprices, and with him there is often the condition of adultery and fornication, because woman and her body are just objects to be used for his own purposes. Another factor which above all must be considered is that woman depends on man economically, and this generates a kind of social oppression by which woman is subjugated.

For this reason, de Beauvoir investigates the concrete reference to the reality in which the female body finds itself: the adult woman to whom this consideration is related is subjugated by man’s dependence. She is incapable of breaking free from male authority, and therefore their marriage is also influenced by male dominance, and with him it becomes a way for her to make a career in society. This kind of twentieth-century woman becomes the target of de Beauvoir’s study because, although she had the possibility for economic independence, she nevertheless behaved in a way which, complicit with other women, promoted her oppression by man.¹⁸ Hence the biological factor and male domination seems to be, in this context, something which has to be admitted: woman has to be dominated, so much so that “the male finds in the woman more complicity than the oppressor usually in the oppressed.”¹⁹ For this reason, the same body works as a social factor of discrimination: to some women of the 20th century, to be female implies being subjected to male authority and losing every individuality. The sexual discrepancy between the genders becomes obvious through the plexus which is created between the relation of female oppression and the preservation of her otherness as an independent subject from the male in society. The tale of both—oppression of woman and preservation of her individuality—created a sexual discrepancy because of the biological consideration of the female body, in which men and women are different subjects of the same society. While these sexual discrepancies exist between the genders, the notion of the body does not have to be intolerably vague, but is intended as a concrete medium capable of establishing a relation with man, which can also influence the relation between the genders in society. This is possible—and it is this last thing which will be pointed out in this chapter—if man as the Other sees woman not only in her *Körper*, but also as *Leib*, the female has to be able to

¹⁴ Cf. Alonso-Lasheras, Diego. *Luis de Molina's De Iustitia Et Iure: Justice as Virtue in an Economic Context*. Brill, 2011, 104.

¹⁵ “Das Wort *dominium* variiert in seinen Verwendungsweisen zwischen „ausgeübter Herrschaft“ und „Eigentum“, was in den Argumentationen entsprechend, ausgenützt wird, später differenzierte man zwischen einem *dominium proprietatis*, welches das Eigentum bezeichnete und einem *dominium iurisdictionis*, womit die Herrschaft der Regenten über Freie benannt wurde, während Sklaven eben zum privaten Eigentum gehörten.” Cf. Kaufmann, Matthias. *Recht*. Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, Berlin, 2016, 186.

¹⁶ Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 176.

¹⁷ Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 80.

¹⁸ Card, Claudia (Hg.). *The Cambridge Companion to Simone de Beauvoir*. Cambridge University Press, 2003, 20.

¹⁹ Cf. De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*.

represent the experience to herself as such.²⁰ That means that both genders are able to create a symmetry which gives both harmony as such. To obtain that, man has to recognize the aspiration to transcendence in woman, and woman has to accept his immanence.²¹

In the next chapter, I will focus on these two aspects. I will clarify how the harmony of transcendence and immanence can result in a relationship between the genders which is based on respect of the other and mutual freedom. In this way, the biological etiquette with respect to female individuality will be overcome.

2. The body as Being-in-Otherness:

A new way for harmony between the genders

According to de Beauvoir, the claims on the body and the difference between the genders can be overridden: Despite that, this is not intended as a greater philosophical sophistication, because this proposes a very close kinship with the *situation* that reflects itself in the historical context. Examining the situation in which the body is integrated implies taking into consideration not only the specified technical, economic, and social development of the world, which is experienced by the individual, but also implies taking the body as lived experience, where corporeal experience appertains to the living being.²² In patriarchal society, “women have no grasp on the world of men because their experience doesn’t teach them to use logic and technique; inversely, masculine apparatus loses his power at the frontiers of the feminine realm. There is a whole region of human experience which the male deliberately chooses to

ignore because he fails to think it: this experience woman lives.”²³ Giving priority to woman’s experiential side means valuing the relation with the world by which the human being lives. According to de Beauvoir, this relation must be intended—as was shown in the last chapter—as an overcoming of all the social conventions and requirements of patriarchal society, with a preference for the authentic aspect of woman’s life. This character is assumed as a way to obtain freedom and to avoid what Martin Heidegger in *Being and Time* (1927) understands as “the they” in the context of the world analysis. “The they” achieves an understanding of Being as a whole, so that he can put his own self and his possible ought to can be allowed to happen in the world, because this question is a constitutive moment of worldly existence according to the context of law, which requires one to “rule,” which keeps the Being-with-otherness. According to that, the world obtains another configuration because it is intended as a relation between two elements, language and law; with language, the world becomes perceptible, so the worldliness of the world of every existence refers to the right of the people. This process systematically puts through a kind of law which takes people and brings their objective reality into an owning being. For this reason, on the one hand, this shows the objective determination of the people. On the other hand, it seems to be already determined in what is revealed. This can provide the laws of the subject: so, the “ought to” of the exterior appears as something which is required to be an objectivity whereby the human being reveals itself as subject. Assuming that for Heidegger *Being-in-the-world* became the formal indication of being-there, which is not first locked up within itself, neither does it have to step outside itself to meet the external world, this means that the human being is always already standing out *in* a world. So what Heidegger intends as “Dasein” has to surpass selfhood to get what the world wants to show; therefore, there is a surmounting of a

²⁰ Cf. Mirvish, Adrian. ‘Simone de Beauvoir’s Two Bodies and the Struggle for Authenticity’. *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française*, 2003, 13. Jg., Nr. 1, 81.

²¹ Vgl. Giuliani, Regula. ‘Spielräume der Freiheit. Feministische Utopien seit den 50er Jahren: Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray und Judith Butler’. *FZG–Freiburger Zeitschrift für GeschlechterStudien*, 1998, 4. Jg., Nr. 7, 164.

²² Cf. O’Brien, Wendy; Embree, Lester (Hg.). *The Existential Phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2001, 51.

²³ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 581.

selfish dimension in favour of the Others: so what Heidegger identified as selfhood becomes the condition to get the otherness dimension. This can also be defined as what is wrong in the tradition of metaphysics; here Dasein is always considered in its singular dimension, and this approach goes back to presence at hand, which Heidegger avoids to re-situate value in ontology. Moreover, by “the they”, “the Being-with-one-another dissolves one’s own Dasein completely into the kind of Being Others in such a way, indeed that the Others, as distinguishable and explicit vanish more and more.”²⁴

This small digression is useful to show how Martin Heidegger’s concept of “the they” is reflected in de Beauvoir’s conception of the way to obtain authenticity, because the “being authentic” of woman implies avoiding the objectification of her body by the gaze of the Other and recognizes that “if I wish to define myself, I must first of all say: “I am a woman.”²⁵

This implies not only getting back the law in which she can obtain her authenticity—namely, her individuality inside society—but also eliminating the language that is used by patriarchal society, which is based on self-justification. Indeed, through the myth that this society “imposed its law and its costume upon an individual in a picturesque, effective manner [...] Through such intermediaries as religions, traditions, language, tales, songs, movies, the myths penetrate even into such existences as are most harshly enslaved to material realities.”²⁶

This world isn’t scared by society anymore, with the risk of being subjugated by the male; when woman is able to affirm herself by male authority, although her biological characteristic, her Being, will be able to present the necessary condition to preserve her independence in case of her relationship with the *other* partner: as a result, she becomes authentic. In this condition, where both genders

are independent from one another, and where Simone de Beauvoir ascribes the ideal relationship between the genders, there are “entirely self-sufficient human beings to form unions one with another only in accordance with the untrammelled dictates of their mutual love.”²⁷ In this context, the concept refers to the dichotomy which is established between people, between “me and you”, every time that a relationship is created, where it is necessary to again consider what the body means for Simone de Beauvoir, because it seems to be that de Beauvoir tries to stress the ideal concept of *self-sufficiency*, which becomes the canon of reference for a balanced relationship between the genders.²⁸ To object to this consideration, we have to consider the analysis of de Beauvoir in the philosophical context in which it appertains: her thought cannot be ascribed only to the existentialist because she also belongs within the phenomenological tradition and she knows the principles of Husserl’s thought.²⁹ Using Husserl’s principles as an instrument to conduct this confrontation can clarify, not only how this movement influenced her philosophical analysis of the body, but also the plexus which determines itself between authenticity and individuality. Therefore, if we take as reference the phenomenological tradition in which Simone de Beauvoir was involved, then it is possible to specify three aspects of the phenomenon of “woman” and her “body” that are necessary to consider:

²⁷ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 453.

²⁸ Mirvish, Adrian. ‘Simone de Beauvoir’s Two Bodies and the Struggle for Authenticity’, *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française*, 80.

²⁹ Obviously, as Margaret Simon points out, Simone de Beauvoir was also familiar with the work of Merleau-Ponty. In the *Phenomenology of Perception* in particular, Merleau-Ponty submitted “the living body to an extensive and thorough study in the first part.” Because I am concentrating on the political role of the body, I will not investigate the influence of Merleau-Ponty on Simone de Beauvoir here. Margaret Simons’ book *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Essays* is of interest in this regard, in that it analyses the connection of de Beauvoir and phenomenology. Cf. Simons, Margaret. (Hg.). *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Essays*. Indiana University Press, 2006.

²⁴ Heidegger, Martin. *Sein und Zeit* (1927), translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson as *Being and Time*, Blackwell, Oxford 2001, 164.

²⁵ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 15.

²⁶ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 266.

1. The distinction between “*Leib*” and “*Körper*”, according to Husserl;
2. The relation between transcendence and immanence;
3. The Openness of woman to world;

The first point which needs to be developed concerns the notion of living body and the sexual relationship between the genders. Pointing out the “living” characteristic of the body means privileging the aspect of its activity, as something that is capable of acting in the world. However, in his lecture “Thing and Space” (1907), and again in the second part of *Ideas* (1913), Husserl refers to two important concepts which determine the role of the body in space, even as his argument encloses two nodal points: the body’s objectivity and spatiality. According to Husserl, we have to distinguish between *Körper* and *Leib*, precisely between the physical body and its living flesh, because “in the case of perception, which is here our immediate interest, there accompanies this relation (inasmuch as perception is a lived experience) to the Ego a perceptual relation of the Object to the Ego-Body [*Ichleib*] as well and, further, a certain constitution in the character of total perception, by virtue of which I have my standpoint and, pertaining to this, a certain perceived environment, to which the thing belongs which I in each case call specifically the perceived, the just-now seen or heard.”³⁰ Husserl’s point is that there is an essential difference of perception between the “physical body” and the “living flesh”, because one represents the active (*Leib*), while the other is the passive and resistant object (*Körper*).

In her critical comparison of de Beauvoir and Husserl, Margaret Simons suggests that “the living body is primary for Husserl, and that it appears essentially as the expression and instrument of the spirit. It is not a separate reality, but it is the horizon of all our activities, both everyday dealings and scientific idealizations.”³¹

It is possible to find this difference again in *The Second Sex*: the body is considered as an instrument which gives the possibility of the radiation of subjectivity. It makes possible comprehension of the world because “it is through the eyes, the hands, that children apprehend the universe, and not through the sexual part.”³² Nevertheless, man remains the active part of sexual activity because he gives sense and value to all the functions which concern this exercise.³³ Contrary to that, the female body presents the characteristics of an object in society, an object which is used only to condescend to the desire of man. From this perspective, the sexual act is given the characteristic of a service which is assigned to woman, from which it is possible to deduce that her preference is ignored, so that marriage becomes a way to deny her man’s liberty.

This reflection induces us to consider the second point of this analysis, concerning the relationship between transcendence and immanence, because “in both sexes is played out the same drama of the flesh and the spirit, of finitude and transcendence.”³⁴

If woman must be considered as a subject which embraces transcendence and freedom, like man, then the “drama of the flesh” conception of the body can be overridden, because a new condition by which there is a reciprocal need for one another can be developed in *loving* experience. Therefore, “the erotic experience is one that most poignantly discloses to human beings the ambiguity of their condition; in it they are aware of themselves as flesh and as spirit, as the other and as subject,” so there isn’t any assumption for eternal hostility between the genders. In this context, the same humanity is to be considered as something more than an agglomeration of species, because it concerns an historical development. Indeed, “it is impossible to demonstrate the existence of a rivalry between the human male and female of a truly psychological

³⁰ Husserl, Edmund. *Thing and Space: Lectures of 1907*. Springer Science & Business Media, 2013, 9.

³¹ Simons, Margaret. (Hg.). *The Philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir: Critical Essays*. Indiana University Press, 2006,

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³² De Beauvoir, Simone, *The second sex*, 273.

³³ Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 423.

³⁴ Cf. de Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 684.

nature.”³⁵ Therefore, her dream of castration must be reduced to her desire to deprive man of his transcendence. Traditional marriage doesn’t give any possibility for woman to realize her transcendence with man: it imposes the condition that man is the one that is able to produce, fight, and create the totality of the universe and the infinity of the future. Consequently, woman is confined in her immanence and she is not able to get out of it, where the only purpose that she has is to preserve balance within the micro society, the family, that she creates by being housebound. The meaning of their love is also devalued within these confines, because it is reduced to wifely affection for the male. The only purpose that she has is “the continuation of all human species through time to come.”³⁶ The reason for this is that it is codified that woman is inferior in this society. So how can balance between the genders be established again? Definitely not if woman tries to destroy the truth of man and his values, because in doing so she is only defending herself. A woman who defines herself as emancipated wants to be active, “a taker, and she refuses the passivity man means impose to her.”³⁷ Being doomed to male authority cannot give any solution, because “all oppression creates a state of war.”³⁸ For this reason, if woman tries to realize transcendence in immanence, she will not be able to change the condition of *dominium* in which she finds herself. Here I come to the third part of my argument: this *vicious* circle can be broken if woman in her openness to the world has the same condition of man, where marriage is based on the free agreement of both genders.

The society to which de Beauvoir aspired is basically founded on the equality of human beings, where the possibility for an open future is laid out and the achievement of the own objectivity is realized.³⁹ But

what is the role of the Other in this context? How can the body be the core of the political difference between the genders? Both of these questions will be analysed in the last chapter. In this chapter, I will clarify how the natural differences between the genders disappear if woman is able to deploy her transcendent concept of freedom in society.

3. “Woman will be always woman.” Also if she is considered as “Other”⁴⁰

The society that de Beauvoir aims to create overrides the differences between the genders: it is based on their equality if it is understood that the concept of woman, as the “dominant” male intends it, doesn’t exist in itself; instead, it is just a product, an elaboration of this kind of society. Another facet of patriarchy is that “life has worn in his eyes a double aspect: it is consciousness, will, transcendence, it is the spirit; and it is matter, passivity, immanence, it is the flesh.”⁴¹ This mistake, which leads to the objectification of woman, is caused first of all— as has been shown—by the role that her body assumes according to its biological value in patriarchal society. Indeed, woman is the myth of femininity incarnate, the Other which is negated from man to preserve this dominant sense of themselves.⁴² This has happened because the myth has reduced her to a conscious being, a human essence naturally submissive to the male. So, de Beauvoir indicates that some expressions such as “Thank God for having created woman,” or “Nature is good since she has given women to men,” which belong to the religious context as a demonstration that woman, as “happy accident”, nevertheless appears in her own Being, which is an instance independent from him, as the Other regarding man, who represents the subject— namely, the real “Being”—in this case. The importance

Simone de Beauvoir. Ed. diskord, 2002, 187.

⁴⁰ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 682.

⁴¹ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 134.

⁴² Changfoot, Nadine. ‘Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex*: Revisiting masculinist ontology’. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 2009, 35. Jg., Nr. 4, S. 399.

³⁵ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 674

³⁶ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 422.

³⁷ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 676.

³⁸ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 675.

³⁹ Cf. Moser, Susanne. *Freiheit und Anerkennung bei*

that she attached to history is obviously different: if we think about the condition of Spartan and other Greek women, then we can see that there were some consistent discrepancies among them. A Spartan woman had access to the State, while a woman in classical Athens had no legal personhood and had to be dedicated to her *oikos*, namely, economics regarding her family and all consequential duties. This myth of the woman also aligns with her consideration of her body from childhood as an object in modern society, which creates on this basis the legal norms that woman must follow to become a “woman,”⁴³ since the same representation of the world became a work of man. All the priority is given to his action and works, and, consequently, the meaning of the individuality of woman, as a subject capable of affirming herself in the modern world, disappears. If the rules that the myth ascribes to the consideration of woman are followed, then she will be intended as the Other, namely, “it remains nonetheless true that she is always defined as the Other,”⁴⁴ in that man seeks the Other as nature in woman, and all that derives from this approach is fellow being.

This idea, of woman’s Otherness and the consequential consideration of the female body as an object of male subordination, can be changed. The possibility is given if there is a genuine sexual reciprocity between two active, living bodies; in this way, woman can then obtain the meaning of freedom and emancipation. Nevertheless, a “woman who expends her energy, who has responsibilities, who knows how harsh the struggle against the world’s opposition is, needs like the male not only to satisfy her physical desires but also to enjoy the relaxation and diversion provided by agreeable sexual adventures.”⁴⁵ When there is this mutual appreciation of sexual experience, and

consequently when there is no place for masochism and sadism, and when the body is not considered as a mere object,⁴⁶ subjugation of woman will not be found. Contrarily, the body will give both authors of this sexual experience mutual pleasure. The inherent contradiction that the woman must live—namely, between herself and the Other—can be overridden in support of the collaboration between the two genders. So, the abyss which has separated woman and man, and which has existed since earliest childhood, and which establishes that woman *was made*, gets through eroticism and love that which takes on the “nature of free transcendence and not that of resignation,”⁴⁷ a relationship between equals. The reason is that “as a matter of fact, man, like woman, is flesh, therefore passive, the plaything of his hormones and of the species, the restless prey of his desires [...] If, however, both should assume the ambiguity with a clear-sighted modesty, correlative of an authentic pride, they would see each other as equals and would live out their erotic drama in amity.”⁴⁸

Therefore, both genders are conscious of the last *drama* which unites all living existence, and which regards their finitude and transcendence: time will consume their essence, so they will have at last the same need: the liberty of their life.

4. Conclusion

The body as the core of the political difference between the genders, as an instrument capable of determining the difference between male and female, must be overridden, because man and woman are constituted by the same finitude substance. The time of their biological constitution is always present and equal for both. Moreover, there is any biological prerequisite which enshrines this difference. The myth which is always given

⁴³ Changfoot, Nadine. ‘Transcendence in Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex: Revisiting masculinist ontology’. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 2009, 35. Jg., Nr. 4, S 399.

⁴⁴ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 133.

⁴⁵ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 648

⁴⁶ cf. Mirvish, Adrian. ‘Simone de Beauvoir’s Two Bodies and the Struggle for Authenticity’. *Bulletin de la Société Américaine de Philosophie de Langue Française*, 84.

⁴⁷ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 684.

⁴⁸ De Beauvoir, Simone, *The Second Sex*, 685.

to woman for the constitution of her body is that of a delicate Being needing the support of a man, able to conduct her by the pathway of her life. Contrarily, Simone de Beauvoir shows how woman is independent from man, despite her menstruation, her uterus, and the interlay constitution of her body. The vindication of her independence is not seen just a kind of subjugation of woman by man, but as a kind of prevarication, where eventually the roles are inverted, and woman dominates man. This solution would not make any sense, because justice can never be done amid injustice: The relation between both must be equal. So, an *emancipated* woman, who is conscious of her body and of her biological constitution, must consider herself an existence independent from man and must continue to exist also recognizing him as subject. This relationship is based on mutual respect between the genders. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that male and female are never victims of each other biologically, but are both victims of their species, so that their relationship undergoes oppression by institutions which they haven't created. As a result, life through the equality of man and woman surely loses its "salt" and "spice": the woman showing herself autonomous, will be denied those conveniences in society which are attributed to her and which "she has to" follow and which for sure do not concern sexual adventure, which she has with man, where, in that case, reciprocal freedom of the genders can also be found. So, what can the solution to achieve equality be? A mutual respect must exist between woman and man which can give a kind of conscious liberty. Through that the genders, also in their difference, obtain their place in the world.