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by

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Abstract

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In recent years, philosophers and political theorists began to treat sex as a serious intellectual topic. Though their work involves broad disciplinary and theoretical differences, it is in all cases characterized by a conception of sexual motivation. That is the topic I attempt to pursue here. Toward that end, I examine the behavioral specifications that analytic philosophers have given for states of 'sexual desire' (Chapter One); I inquire into the problems of consciousness that phenomenologists have thought 'sexual desire' to entail (Chapter Two); I survey the attempts of moral philosophers to account for the moral dimension of sexual experience (Chapter Three); I examine the psychoanalytic attempt to isolate the emotional basis of 'sexual desire', and to account for the sorts of emotional conflict often given sexual expression (Chapter Four). I give particular attention to feminist views of sexuality (Chapter Five), and to political views of the liberating and/or repressive character of sexual experience (Chapter Six).

I offer two main arguments: Concerning the definition of sexuality, I argue that 'sexual desire' is neither a glandular, bodily phenomenon nor a matter of social relations, but is best thought of as a subjunctive sort of desire, a desire in which bodily and

social aims are mixed, and often distorted. Concerning the political significance of sexuality, I argue that political thinking about sexuality is unduly limited by contraints which derive from the work of Marx and Freud: Sexuality tends to be seen as either a model for communal relations or as a dangerous energy, best repressed. Neither view seems sufficient on its own. If there is to be a political theory of sex that will support a sexual politics, it must be a theory that maintains a critical perspective upon the psychologically ambivalent character of sexuality, while at the same time allowing for the possible reinvention of sexuality. Though no such theory has yet been advanced, this essay is intended as a step in that direction.

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PREFACE

The domestic politics of recent years has been marked by widespread attention to sexual issues. In the 1960's, issues of sexual freedom and political protest were often fused, and the slogan, "make love not war", was heard on many campuses. The 1970's saw the rise of the gay and woman's liberation movements, and the re-examination of public attitudes concerning both sexual preference and gender. As of this writing, the 1980's appear to be host to a reaction to the sexual liberation movements, a reaction which is distinctive in its celebration of traditional family values.

The recent politicization of sexuality has had the effect of challenging conventional attitudes about sexuality, as well as of raising questions about the prevailing paradigm of sexuality, on which view sex is thought to involve a two-person, heterosexual relation. Though it is clear that this paradigm is inadequate, it is not clear what sort of paradigm should replace it, or how that paradigm is to be constructed. That is the task I pursue here.

Though everyone has powerful ideas and opinions about sex, the intellectual attempt to describe the essence of sex is by no means an easy matter. In Chapter One I inquire into the attempts of analytic philosophers to offer a descriptive paradigm, or model, of sexual desire. For the most part, these efforts involve an attempt to relate sex to other sorts of behaviors, and the arguments presented rest upon analogies which seem not to capture the internal, psychological aspects of sexual desire.

Another way of creating a model of sex is by demonstrating the

inherent moral value of sexuality. This is the path taken by the moral philosophers Thomas Nagel and Sara Ruddick, whose efforts are examined in Chapter Two. The paradigm they offer is one which stresses the mutuality of sexual experience, while somewhat minimizing the guilt and fantasy often associated with sexual desire.

A third source of insight into sexuality is available in the phenomenological tradition, particularly in the work of Hegel and Sartre--which is examined in Chapter Three. It is possible to find in Hegel's Phenomenology a model of the dominative character of desire, and to see this model replicated in Sartre's Being and Nothingness. On Sartre's explicit view, the sexual encounter is portrayed as a battle of consciousness, a form of sado-masochistic dialogue. By assimilating sex to aggression, however, Sartre appears to somewhat minimize the independent and complex nature of sexual motivation.

In Chapter Four I examine the psychoanalytic model of sexuality, which stresses the unconscious, internally conflicting aspects of sexual experience. This is a model which stresses the subjective difficulty of giving direct and full expression to sexual feeling, as well as the subjective ambivalence between hostility and caring which is often given sexual expression. On the psychoanalytic model the unconscious, internal aspects of sexual experience are emphasized, somewhat at the expense of the conscious, social dimension of sexuality. It is for this reason that certain crucial issues which bear upon sexuality--in particular, the issue of gender and the issue of sexual liberation--are best examined outside the context of orthodox psychoanalytic thought.

In Chapter Five I examine representative works of feminist social criticism, giving special attention to the argument, made by Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow, that the child's introduction

to his or her sexuality is--under the present mode of maternal parenting--an introduction to sexual inequality. It is argued that that claim, though true, somewhat minimizes the similarity of male and female sexual experience.

In Chapter Six I examine the sexual politics of Marx and Freud, giving special attention to the prospect of sexual liberation. Marx sees sexuality as a naturally social relation, and as a model for non-egoistic, non-oppressive relations in communist society. Freud emphasizes the repressive aspects of sexuality, for it is his position that sexual repression is intimately tied to the cultural achievements of civilization. Here it is argued that Marx's insight into the spontaneous, social nature of sex is somewhat facile; it is also argued that, despite Freud's insights into the complex and self-deceptive character of sexuality, his judgment concerning the invariant character of the social structures he observed is also somewhat facile. Today it must seem that the prospect of liberated sexuality is neither as unproblematic as Marx, nor yet as problematic--and certainly not as unattainable--as Freud thought.

Marx finds in sexuality a model of revolution, while Freud finds that the survival of civilization partly depends on the repression of sexuality. The fact that two such eminent thinkers can offer such divergent views suggests the difficulty of building a sexual paradigm that is both psychologically and politically convincing. To be credible, a sexual paradigm must be focussed upon sex and society; it must combine psychological insight with social critique. Though that is the main conceptual problem with which I am concerned, there is also a methodological problem. Despite the enormous interest

and literature concerning sex, the intellectual inquiry into sexuality tends to be marked by the distortions that most observers bring to this most personal of topics, and by the unavoidable exaggeration of certain aspects of sexual experience at the expense of others. I have no doubts that I am also guilty of this trait, though perhaps that is a matter the reader is in best position to judge.

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CHAPTER ONE

Many years I have wandered through the land of men, and have not yet reached an end of studying the varieties of the "erotic man" ... There a lover stamps around and is in love only with his passion. There one is weaving his differentiated feelings like medal-ribbons. There one is enjoying the adventures of his own fascinating effect. There one is gazing enraptured at the spectacle of his own supposed surrender. There one is displaying his "power". There one is preening himself with borrowed vitality. There one is delighting to exist simultaneously as himself and as an idol very unlike himself. There one is warming himself at the blaze of what had fallen to his lot. There one is experimenting. And so on and on--all the manifold monologists with their mirrors, in the apartment of the most intimate dialogue!

Martin Buber, "Dialogue". Between Man and Man. trans. R. G. Smith. Routledge Kegan Paul. 1947.

Section A: Introduction

The philosophical views examined in Chapter One are attempts to specify what sexual desire is. Each is an attempt to spell out the essential character of sexual desire. The views examined may be divided into two groups: those attempting to specify the behavioral conditions of sexual desire, and those attempting to specify the essential motive of sexual desire. Shaffer and Goldman offer behavioral accounts; Solomon and Ruddick offer motive-based accounts. The last view examined, Janice Moulton's, is not specifically intended as an analysis of sexual desire; Moulton's view is that the emotional states associated with sex are different enough to suggest different kinds of sexual behavior. Here it is argued that Moulton's view suggests different kinds of feelings associated with sexual desire, but not different kinds of sexual desires. It is further argued that, instructive as each of these five views are, none is sufficient for sexual desire.

Section B: Sexual Desire as a Desire for Communication

In his essay, "Sexual Paradigms", Robert Solomon advances the idea that sex is a sort of communication. Hence he says:

> Sexual activity consists in speaking what we might call "body language". It has its own grammar, delineated by the body, and its own phonetics of touch and movement. Its unit of meaningfulness, the bodily equivalent of a sentence, is the gesture...body language is essentially expressive, and its content is limited to interpersonal attitudes and feelings.1

On Solomon's position, sex is an activity in which persons are saying something to one another with their bodies. 'Sexual desire' is the condition of wanting to say something, wanting to communicate the whole range of human emotions in an intimate, bodily way.

Solomon contrasts his view with the physiological view that

sexual desire is essentially a desire for sexual intercourse, claiming "it is only in the crudest cases that the desire for intercourse is the only or even leading component in the convoluted motivation of sexuality".[2] In addition, Solomon criticizes Thomas Nagel's view, that sexual desire is essentially a desire for mutual arousal. Solomon thinks Nagel's criterion is neither necessary nor sufficient for sexual desire, since it is possible for persons to experience mutual arousal without sexually desiring one another, and since it is often the case that persons sexually desire one another, without experiencing mutual arousal. According to Solomon, Nagel's model of sexuality is purely formal: sexual partners arouse each other, "but there is no indication to what end".

Solomon also criticizes the view that sexual desire is essentially a desire for sensual pleasure or enjoyment. Solomon thinks that, although it is typically the case that sex is sensually pleasurable, sensual pleasure is not an essential characteristic of sex. Moreover, Solomon thinks it rather disasterous that our culture has placed such a high premium on sensual pleasure, as opposed to the "expressive functions of sex", which he deems essential to it. What has happened, according to Solomon, is that our culture has "reduced sexuality to each man's/woman's private language". This tendency--a tendency toward the 'privatization' of sex--is on Solomon's view perverse.

But, <u>contra</u> Solomon, sexually enjoying oneself is a state that does not seem incompatible with saying something sexually. In fact, a good case can be made for the idea that, of all the many goals of sex, 'sensual pleasure' and 'sensual enjoyment' are the most im-

portant, since if one is not enjoying oneself it is unlikely that one has anything that is sexually interesting to "say". As Janice Moulton suggests, enjoying oneself sexually and saying something sexually are not like trying to 'eat peanut butter' or 'swim under water' while talking. One can do both things at once. In fact, it might even seem that, the more one enjoys oneself, the more likely it is that one will be an interesting sexual "conversationalist".

If Solomon disparages the idea that sensual pleasure is essential to sex--and thereby an essential goal of sexual desire--it is because it is his view that sensual pleasure is essentially private, at odds with the communicative and social nature of sex. For Solomon, it is axiomatic that sex between persons is "far more satisfying than masturbation..."[3] But Solomon's axiom is mere assertion. Whether onanism or sexual intercourse is more satisfying is, as many would remind us, a matter of individual preference. Perhaps it would be a good thing if sex were more often more like a conversation between two persons, rather than a self-absorbed activity; but thinking cannot make it so.

Solomon thinks sex is a sort of body language, and he thereby assumes that the essential goal of sex, like spoken language, is saying something to another. But Solomon's claim betrays a narrow, or at least a non-inclusive conception of language. Language is not merely an instrument of communication; it is also something that is essential to self-expression. If spoken language must, by definition, meet the criterion of "saying something" to another, this is not the case with language per se. As Solomon draws it, the analogy between sex and language rests on the supposition that both are

conversational. But this is fair neither to language nor to sex, for it is a view that entails--erroneously--that the soliloquoy is a borderline case of language in the same way that it entails that masturbation is a borderline case of sex.

Contra Solomon, a good case can be made for the idea that sexual desire is always, at least in part, auto-erotic, as well as for the related idea that masturbation constitutes a core case of sex, and not a borderline case of it. This is not to deny Solomon's insight that sex, in contrast with other sorts of pursuits, is a highly expressive activity. But it is to deny that sex necessarily "says something" to another person. The fallacy of Solomon's argument is the supposition that sexual expression is sexual communication. In sex--as in artistic endeavors--attempts at self-expression often resemble talking to oneself much more than talking with another person. We might want to say of sex what is often said of abstract art: we know it expresses something, but we're not sure what.

Solomon thinks that sex is the "best" way to communicate certain kinds of attitudes, and he counts among these attitudes of tenderness and trust, as well as domination and passivity. There is no question that sex is an activity in which people may get these ideas across; the question is whether sex is, in some paradigmatic sense, the "best" way to get these ideas across. Despite Solomon's claim to the contrary, it seems a moot issue as to whether 'domination' is better expressed by pointing a gun to someone's head or by chaining them to a bedpost. Solomon's judgment that 'trust' is "best" conveyed sexually seems more persuasive. It certainly is the case that sexual partners are in a position to be open with one another

in ways not available through other kinds of activity. But sex is not the only way to communicate one's 'trust' in another person. If it seems true that sex is the "best" way to communicate 'trust', it also seems true that sex is a fairly precarious way of communicating 'trust'. Close friendships, like sexual relationships, often epitomize 'trust', but the 'trust' that epitomizes friendship is sometimes either threatened or sacrificed if the friendship reaches the sexual stage.

Solomon's conception of sex as communication seems a worthy sexual ideal, but it seems arbitrary to claim it as the only sexual ideal. Nor is the value of communicativeness sufficient to the task Solomon sets for it--that of distinguishing between perverse and non-perverse sex. On Solomon's conception of the sexually perverse, sadism is perverse, not because it is cruel but because it is an "excessive expression" of "domination". Sadism, in other words, is perverse because of its resemblance to boring conversation; sadism is not interesting. On Solomon's judgment, "entertaining private fantasies" during sex is also perverse, since doing so is "the bodily equivalent of the lie".[4] In other words, private fantasy is perverse because it violates the conversational <u>desideratum</u> of telling the truth.

Given Solomon's claims concerning the perverse, it is possible to construct a theory of sexual value: sex that is non-perverse, and 'good' in that sense, is like a conversation that is both truthful and interesting. The problem with this theory is that its requirements are to some degree incompatible. Even within the context of actual conversation--not sexual "conversation"--it may be quite diffi-

cult to be both interesting and truthful. Sometimes the truth is not all that interesting, and sometimes it is easier to be interesting if one exaggerates or stretches the 'truth'. To the extent these requirements are incompatible, Solomon's theory does not offer a way to distinguish perverse from non-perverse sex. This should not appear too surprising a conclusion, especially in view of the psychoanalytic claim that the sexual desires of all persons are in varying degrees but without exception perverse.

Solomon's conception of sex as communication is an attempt to construct an account of human sexuality as analogous to language. The strength of the analogy is that it conveys the sense in which sexual desire may be expressive, as well as the way that sexual desire may convey all sorts of emotional content. The weakness of Solomon's analogy is that it is disparaging of the sense in which sexual desire is a bid for sensual pleasure. Though Solomon is alert to the wide variety of desires that may be subsumed under sexual desire, he does not sufficiently explain what makes sexual desire 'sexual'.

Section C: Sexual Desire as a Desire for Pleasurable Contact

Alan Goldman, in "Plain Sex", criticizes those who hold that sexual desire is a desire for a highminded end, such as communication or interpersonal awareness.[1] Goldman criticizes Solomon's view of sex as communication as well as Thomas Nagel's view, that sexual desire, properly expressed, invokes the shared awareness of partners. Both positions, Goldman avers, posit ends which are separable from and extraneous to sexual activity. According to Goldman, the fact that one may use sex to communicate various messages and feelings

does not show that sex is "primarily a means of interpersonal communication".[2] While shared awareness and communication are good things, they are the sort of thing that suggests a "sex-manual approach" to sex. That, according to Goldman, is the sort of approach which may distract sexual partners from the more ordinary, characteristic pleasures which attend "plain" sex.

For Goldman, sexual desire is forthrightly physical, having no other goal than the achievement of pleasurable bodily contact. On Goldman's view, "Sexual desire is desire for another person's body and for the pleasure which such contact produces".[3] Moreover, according to Goldman, the desire for bodily contact is both a necessary and sufficient condition for normal sexual desire. All cases of sexual desire entail the desire for bodily contact; and all cases in which the desire for contact is primary constitute cases of sexual desire.

Both of these views contain difficulties, though the difficulties of the latter view are more perspicuous. In defense of the latter view, Goldman contends that the hugs and caresses of parents and children do not constitute sexual contact, since in that case the motive of the contact is not the desire for contact itself, but "showing affection". Yet this distinction--that between desiring contact alone and affectionate contact--seems implausible. On Goldman's criterion, a heartfelt embrace could not count as a case of sexual desire, since such an embrace conveys affection and is not undertaken for its own sake. On the other hand, casual contact, conveying little or no emotional weight at all would constitute sexual desire. Goldman's criterion thereby introduces an improbable classification scheme: all contact is either desired for itself and thereby <u>sexual</u>, or else it is desired

for another reason, in which case it is not a genuine desire for contact. Yet in most cases the desire for contact among parents and children appears to be both genuine and non-sexual. If that is true, such contact offers a case which falls outside Goldman's classification scheme. Hence the desire for physical contact--even if it is just for physical contact--does not seem a sufficient condition for sexual desire.

What of Goldman's other contention, that sexual desire entails a desire for bodily contact? If we examine the many permutations of sexual desire, it is not difficult to find cases of sexual desire which do not involve a desire for physical contact. Voyeurism is one such case; exhibitionism is another. Goldman might say these cases are beyond the pale of 'normal' sexual desire. But what would he say about auto-erotic desire, which Freud thought a component of 'normal' sexual desire? In the case of auto-erotic desire, it appears that what is desired is not contact with one's body but rather an "immersion" in one's body--a moment Sartre describes as "consciousness making itself body". Bodily contact may be incidental to the onanist's desire, but his sexual desire is no less real for that. Hence it appears that the desire for contact is not only not sufficient, but not necessary for sexual desire.

Goldman is right to suggest that sexual desire need not entail highminded, extraneous goals. But, though the goal, or the desire for physical contact is not highminded it is extraneous, at least for some cases of sexual desire. The good sense of Goldman's view is its attention to the fact that physical contact is usually associated with sexual desire. Though Goldman reminds us that sexual desires

need not be sublime, he does no better than Solomon in showing why sexual desire is sexual. If sexual desire is not linguistic behavior, it is not tactile behavior either.

Section D: Sexual Desire as a Drive for Bodily Satisfaction

In his essay "Sexual Desire" Jerome Shaffer develops the idea that sexual desire is something of a blind state, in that persons may experience sexual desire without desiring any particular sexual activity. According to Shaffer, sexual desire is not "propositional"--it is not a desire that something be the case. Shaffer claims that this logical novelty of sexual desire has led other commentators astray. They have supposed that sexual desire is a desire to do something--or else that something be done--where in fact it is not. Sexual desire, as Shaffer has it, does not by itself entail any specific goal, aim, or end in view.[1]

Shaffer contrasts his view with the view of 'desire' espoused by Anthony Kenny in Action, Emotion, and Will. Kenny claims that, for a desire to be intelligible, one must be able to report how one will attain its object and what one's aim is in doing so. Since intelligibility is a foremost aspect of desire, desires are on Kenny's view similar to motives. To desire food, for example, is to be motivated to get food to relieve one's hunger. According to Shaffer, sexual desire is not a Kenny-type desire. Sexual desire is not only not a motive; it is less open to rational criticism than most emotions. By itself, sexual desire makes "no sense".[2]

Shaffer thinks sexual desire does not fit Kenny's criteria of 'desire'. According to Shaffer, one with sexual desire may be

unable to say what he wants and how he will get it, and his inability to answer these questions does not rule out his having sexual desire. This argument might be taken to mean that sexual desire is more difficult to be precise about than ordinary desire. Alternatively, it might be taken to mean that sexual desires are more difficult to report than ordinary desires. In fact Shaffer's claim is stronger, for it is his position that sexual desire is logically distinct from ordinary desire.

In support of his claim Shaffer cites the case of a widow's sexual desire for her late husband, a case which purportedly demonstrates that the widow's sexual desire is "non-propositional" since "the widow cannot want to have sex with her husband".[3] But Shaffer's account seems equivocal. The widow's sexual desire, though impossible to satisfy, is not on that score "blind"; it is merely impractical. Since both sexual desire and ordinary desire may be terribly impractical, there is little basis for a logical distinction. Though sexual desire is perhaps more often impractical than ordinary desire, that does not show--as Shaffer has it--that sexual desire is not a desire that something be the case.

Shaffer also cites the case of a confirmed heterosexual acknowledging homosexual desire for the first time. Such persons would be "incapable of forming the desire that a certain form of activity take place because he or she would have no notion of such activity".[4] But this case is also equivocal. The fact that the person in question lacks experience may be taken to suggest, not that his sexual desire is blind, but that it is vague. Though the person in question may not know quite what to do, he is likely to have a general idea, since

he has acknowledged his desire. While sexual desire may often be vague, this, again, does not seem an adequate basis for distinguishing sexual desire from ordinary desire. Many ordinary desires may be vague, such as, for example, the desire for fame and fortune. Though such ordinary desires, like sexual desire, might appear unintelligible on Kenny's criteria, they are not logically distinguishable on that basis.

Shaffer says that one might sexually desire someone but "find it unthinkable that he or she actually have sex with that individual".[5] But this seems less a claim about sexual desire than about other, perhaps non-sexual motives of the individual in question. If the individual finds his sexual desire "unthinkable", that might suggest that his desire is difficult to entertain or to articulate. That would not argue that the individual's desire was blind, but rather that it was a desire he found difficult to express.

Shaffer is right that "desiring sex does not entail having sexual desire".[6] One might desire sex in order to insure offspring, get exercise, win a bet, or for any of countless reasons, none of which entail having sexual desire. Even having sexual reasons for desiring sex does not entail having sexual desire; one might desire sex for the bodily satisfaction it affords or the pleasure it produces or to improve a relationship--all are sexual goals which might be pursued without having sexual desire. Clearly, sexual desire is not a sufficient condition for desiring sex.

Shaffer takes this fact to mean that sexual desire is logically different from desiring sex, but there are other ways of explaining it. It seems the case, for example, that sexual desire is an extra-

ordinarily plastic phenomenon. This would suggest that sexual desire is easily associated with other desires that, without suggesting that sexual desire is itself non-propositional. In short Shaffer has not shown that sexual desire is not a desire in Kenny's sense, only that there are certain difficulties in fitting sexual desire to the Kenny model. Sexual desire is often vague, unrealistic, and difficult to report; it is in addition not sufficient for desiring sex, since it is so easily associated with other motives. All of these considerations suggest that sexual desire is more difficult to be intelligible about than ordinary desire, without suggesting that sexual desire is itself "blind".

Though Shaffer thinks sexual desire is unlike ordinary desire, he nonetheless thinks sexual desire is a desire, since it is connected with the idea of satisfaction. On Shaffer's view, though, the idea of satisfaction remains obscured. One with sexual desire is "pushed or carried toward the satisfaction, rather than motivated by (the) picture of what form the satisfaction will take".[7] Shaffer's thought is that sexual desire is a state of unrest, a state pressing for resolution; in this respect, sexual desire is like a drive. One need have no idea what resolution consists in, nor what will count as being satisfying. The body, as it were, is on automatic pilot. Shaffer finds this "automatic" aspect of sexual desire reflected in an attitude--that of regarding an object as the source of satisfaction.[8] In other words, it is Shaffer's view that sexual desire, though not a desire that, is nonetheless a desire. Having sexual desire, one seeks satisfaction from objects without knowing what form the satisfaction will take. Of course, one might take this attitude in re-

lation to many objects--such as hi-fi sets--without having sexual desire. What, then, marks sexual desire as sexual?

Shaffer's answer to this question is that "what is definatory of sexual desire is sexual satisfaction or frustration... What makes desire and satisfaction sexual is the intervening state of sexual arousal, which ...involves the sexual parts, viz., the genital areas".[9] Sexual desire, in other words, is sexual because of its association with the state of bodily arousal. A blind attitude--the mental state of sexual desire--is "sexualized" through its association with arousal--the bodily state of sexual desire. On Shaffer's view, sexual desire is an association between an attitude about satisfaction and the presence of certain bodily signals. Shaffer recognizes that such states need not be conjoined. One might, for example, be sexually aroused by a piece of music without seeking satisfaction from it. Alternatively, one might have incipient yearnings which do not issue in sexual arousal. Nonetheless, Shaffer thinks that the coincidence of these states constitutes sexual desire, since, where they coincide, subsequent events count toward either satisfying or frustrating the "original state".[10]

Shaffer thinks that the chain of events set in motion by arousal confirms that the desire in question is sexual desire. But this does not seem the case. Let us suppose that someone manifest both a blind yearning for an object and was sexually aroused--one could still ask whether the person felt sexual desire. Clearly, such a person would be ready for sex but, as Shaffer himself reminds us, that is not the same as having sexual desire. We would recognize that such a person desired sexual relief, without knowing if his

desire were a sexual desire, rather than a desire "sexualized" during arousal. With such a person, we would recognize the sexual aspect of their desire, though we would not know anything about the quality of it--the sense in which it was their desire. To know that, we would need to know something about the connection between the person's desire and arousal, something more than the fact the desire occured during a state of arousal.

Shaffer's account suggests that bodily arousal and sexual desire are alike in that both are manifestations of the sex drive. Sexual desire is a blind attitude about satisfying the sex drive, and bodily arousal is a more direct manifestation of it. Given the common source, one might expect to find a quantitative relation between sexual desire and arousal, with strong sexual desire likely to result in arousal, and weak sexual desire unlikely to do so. But this does not seem to be the case. Persons may have weakly felt sexual desires which issue in arousal, and strongly felt sexual desires which do not. While only the latter type of case would be ruled out as 'sexual desire' on Shaffer's account, both cases display a divergence between bodily arousal and sexual desire, a divergence which cannot be explained on the assumption that both are manifestations of the same drive. What is needed is some account of the emotional relation between these states or rather, some account of the way in which sexual desire is felt.

Shaffer, in treating sexual desire as a blind drive, suggests that sexual desire is an external bodily force exerted upon the psyche. Sexual desire thereby acquires a negative connotation. Since the terminus of sexual desire is the resolution of bodily arousal,

the implicit aim of sexual desire is reducing bodily tension. Sexual desire is something that, like bodily tension, persons seek to dispel. It is a state one seeks to relieve, or to rid oneself of. While this may be an accurate description of the final moments of sexual arousal, just prior to orgasm, it does not seem an accurate description of sexual desire per se, since the experience of sexual desire is an experience many persons attempt to prolong, rather than relieve. The negative connotation that attaches to Shaffer's account--that sexual desire is a state one is driven to relieve--seems more accurately to describe those who are unacquainted with their sexual desires, rather than those who are.

One final point. Shaffer thinks that sexual desire is typically directed towards practical, attainable objects, and it is his further view that the substitution of co-extensive terms for the object of sexual desire is truth-preserving.[11] But once it is allowed that sexual desire is a phenomenon that may be propelled by fantasy--and not triggered by the presence of a sexual object--then such substitutions do not seem truth-preserving. For example, there may be an important difference between sexually desiring 'one's Mother' and the 'woman who married one's Father', even though both terms refer to the same object. Further, if we allow that a sexual object may exist only in fantasy, the substitution requirement becomes superfluous. For example, if one sexually desires the star of a movie one sees, there may be no possible substitute--not even the movie star in "real life"--for one's sexual object. Both in respect of its objects and aims, sexual desire is a desire that is often felt to be unique in all the world--yet nothing in Shaffer's account suggests

why that might be the case.

Shaffer's construction of sexual desire errs in assuming that sexual desire is blind. Of course, at the moment one is in grip of sexual arousal, it may seem that sexual desire is blind. But this seeming blindness does not show that sexual desire is a state of lapsed motivation, only that there may be some--perhaps characteristic--difficulty in giving reports of that state. This may be due to the exigency of the motives and feelings which are typically associated with arousal, rather than the blindness of sexual desire itself. Shaffer's mistake, it seems, is thinking that the imperious, seemingly blind nature of bodily arousal is the proper model of sexual desire. Physical arousal alone is not sufficient for sexual desire, for it does not suggest the complex ways in which sexual desire is felt as a desire, nor the allied sense in which sexual desire is propelled by fantasy. Shaffer, like Goldman, is at pains to point out the concrete sexual aspect of sexual desire. If Shaffer has done better than Goldman in showing why sexual desire is sexual, he has lost sight of the sense in which sexual desire is a desire that persons feel.

Section E: Sexual Desire as Sensual Pleasure

Sara Ruddick, in her essay "Better Sex", gives an account of sexual desire as well as an account of the intrinsic qualities of sexual relations. The former view is an attempt to spell out what 'sexual desire' is; the latter view is more ambitious, and contains the argument that there are certain qualities, intrinsic to sexual relations, which are of moral value. For that reason I give separate

consideration to these two views, treating Ruddick's latter view as a moral claim about the essential value of sex, while treating Ruddick's view of 'sexual desire' in this section.

It is Ruddick's view that the experience of sexual desire is indistinguishable from the experience of sensual pleasure. Thus: "Sexual desire is not experienced as frustration but as part of sensual pleasure. Normally, sexual desire transforms itself gradually into the pleasure that appears, misleadingly, to be an aim extrinsic to it".[1] In other words, Ruddick conceives of 'sexual desire' as an intrinsically pleasurable experience.

This view of sexual desire contrasts sharply with Shaffer's view. Shaffer thinks that sexual desire is a blind state in which persons are "driven" towards the terminus of satisfaction. On Ruddick's view, sexual desire is itself a pleasurable experience--an experience which does not "end" when a given sexual desire is satisfied. On Ruddick's view the sensual pleasures of sexual desire "continue to be savored" after "resolution"; in addition, the experience of such pleasures "leads to the demand for more of the same".[2] On Ruddick's view sexual desire is not a phenomenon that, like an appetite, is quelled once it is satisfied. Rather, sexual desire is an accretive phenomenon. Sexual desire builds upon sexual desire. If on Shaffer's view, sexual desire is like a reaction to stress, on Ruddick's view sexual desire is like an "addiction to pleasure."[3]

The difference between Shaffer's and Ruddick's views raises the question whether a unified account of sexual desire is possible. But the question whether sexual desire aims at bodily satisfaction, or, rather, is an intrinsically pleasurable experience, does not seem

a question to be decided on the basis of observation. On Ruddick's behalf, it might be said that persons who are aroused by their sexual desires often try to heighten rather than to reduce their sexual tension, and that their attempt to do so seems guided by the "pleasure principle". It might also be said that persons for whom sexual desire is a blind state are persons who have in some way closed themselves off to the pleasures that are there to be found. On Shaffer's behalf, it might be said that it is virtually inconceivable for persons to experience the pleasures of their desires as something independent of the bodily urges they feel. The attempt to heighten sexual tension--no matter how intrinsically pleasurable that state might be--without some hope of bodily resolution might even seem pathological.

The disparity between Ruddick's and Shaffer's views seems to reflect the psychological complexity of sexual desire. Though paradoxical, it is nonetheless true that the experience of sexual desire may feel enervating as well as stimulating; it is an experience that may be, under certain conditions, sensually aggravating, and under other conditions, sensually pleasurable. Persons who are aroused by their sexual desires sometimes feel simultaneous--or near simultaneous--pleasure and pain. Yet, once we allow that there are states of sexual desire which fit both characterizations, then neither Ruddick's nor Shaffer's view seems sufficient on its own. If aroused sexual desire is not just the irritating signal of a drive towards satisfaction, it is not simply a manifestation of the "pleasure principle" either. This would suggest that, if Shaffer is wrong that sexual desire is blind, Ruddick is wrong in thinking that sexual desire is under the sole governance of the "pleasure principle".

Section F: Sensual Arousal Versus Emotional Satisfaction

Janice Moulton, in "Sexual Behavior", argues that sexual behavior "will not fit any single characterization",[1] since there are, in fact, two different kinds of sexual behavior. According to Moulton, one type of sexual behavior is the behavior of partners unfamiliar to one another; it is characterized by feelings of "anticipation" and "winning". The other type of sexual behavior is that of regular partners; it is characterized by feelings of "satisfaction" and "sexual intimacy". On Moulton's view, partners unfamiliar to one another emphasize the pleasure of getting somewhere sexually; in contrast, partners familiar to one another emphasize the pleasure of having arrived: the intimate feelings they share are "increased by the other person's knowledge of (their) preferences and sensitivities...not by the novelty of their sexual interest".[2]

Moulton argues that the state of sexual 'anticipation' may be incompatible with the state of sexual 'satisfaction'. Hence she claims: "A strong feeling of sexual anticipation is produced by the uncertainty, challenge, or secrecy of novel sexual experiences, but the tension and excitement that increase anticipation often interfere with sexual satisfaction".[3] Moulton suggests it is often the case that persons who emphasize 'anticipation' may be sexually 'dissatisfied', and that, similarly, it is often the case that regular sexual partners may be "very satisfied" without any 'anticipatory' "build-up".[4] According to Moulton, then, the psychological incompatibility of 'anticipation' and 'satisfaction' offer further support for the idea that there are two types of sexual behavior.

Moulton's claim--that there are two sorts of sexual behavior--

can be interpreted three ways. On an empirical interpretation of her claim, Moulton is saying that there is a difference between chance encounters and long-term sexual relationships, and that the difference lies in the way that partners in these relationships view each other's feelings. Partners in long-term relationships are more attentive and sensitive to one another's feelings; partners in "novel" encounters are more concerned with sexual excitement and with "making it". Familiar partners place more emphasis upon the variety of their sexual feelings; partners in "novel" encounters place more emphasis on the strength of their sexual feelings, or on their passion.

This interpretation seems open to question. Sexual partners in long-term relationships may--even more so than just-met partners--choose to emphasize 'anticipatory' "build-up" as a way of keeping their sexual relations exciting. In addition unfamiliar sexual partners may be very attentive to one another's feelings, if only as a way of getting beyond the ordinary role-playing and appearing special to one another. Moulton's assumption that long-term encounters are characteristically more "intimate" than chance encounters seems questionable: it is at least sometimes the case that partners in long-term sexual relationships act like sexual strangers to one another, and that just-met sexual partners act, sexually, like old friends.

On a psychological interpretation of her claim, Moulton's distinction between 'anticipation' and 'satisfaction' is a distinction, not between types of sexual relationship, but between different types of emotional states--say, between states of emotional "intimacy" and states of sexual arousal. But even on this interpretation, it does not seem that Moulton's claim of two "behaviors" can be credited.

Though distinct, the states of "intimacy" and sexual arousal are not exclusive, since it is possible to be in both states at one time. Not only does it seem possible for persons to be in both states, it seems this is ordinarily the case with the experience of sexual desire. Persons with sexual desire for one another are likely to enjoy their departure from ordinary states of consciousness. To that extent their experience of sexual desire is--in part--a "novel"experience, an experience which would count as 'anticipatory' in Moulton's sense. In addition, the experience of sexual desire is not one that can be 'made up', for it involves the expression of "familiar" feelings, feelings which can be disguised from another only to a certain degree. To that extent the experience of sexual desire is always somewhat "intimate", and thereby counts as a 'satisfactory' experience in Moulton's sense. The experience of sexual desire, then,does not seem one that involves two kinds of <u>behavior</u>, but one that involves two kinds of emotional state. It would seem then, that sexual desire is an emotionally complex experience in which different emotional states, or different feelings, are interwoven.

Moulton's claim of two sexual behaviors may also be interpreted heuristically. In that event, it is a criticism of the fact that, in most philosophical commentary about sex, little emphasis is given to the "intimate", emotional aspects of sex, while a great deal of attention is paid to its physical aspects. To a large extent this is the case. Goldman and Shaffer ignore the emotional aspects of sexual experience entirely. Solomon, claiming that sex is communication, interprets 'communication' to mean conveying attitudes, not evoking feelings. Though Ruddick is attentive to the fact that sex

is an emotional experience, her view seems limited in its singleminded emphasis upon the sensually pleasurable aspects of sexual experience. Moulton improves on these accounts by suggesting that sex is an activity which may involve diverse emotional states and feelings. But Moulton's claim that such emotional states are exclusive of one another does not seem credible, especially when that claim is examined in connection with the experience of sexual desire. Hence, though Moulton has not demonstrated the existence of two sexual behaviors, she has given credence to the view that sex is an emotionally plastic experience, an experience in which feelings of "intimacy" and "satisfaction" as well as "anticipatory" feelings of arousal tend to be woven.

Section G: Conclusion

By way of review, we may classify the philosophical accounts of Chapter One as attempts to answer two questions about sexual desire. The first is, 'In what sense is sexual desire sexual?' The second is, 'In what sense is sexual desire a desire?'

Goldman and Shaffer direct most of their attention to the first question. Goldman claims that a desire is a sexual one when it has the goal of tactile pleasure. Though tactile pleasure is often what one with sexual desire wants, it is, by itself, neither necessary nor sufficient for sexual desire. Shaffer holds that sexual desire is sexual because of its association with bodily arousal--yet he acknowledges that the association is a contingent one. Neither Goldman nor Shaffer has much to say in answer to the second question. For Goldman, 'desire' is simply the want of pleasurable contact with another body; there is no suggestion whether 'contact' or 'pleasure'

is more important. Shaffer deals with the question as though it were merely semantic, arguing that sexual desire is a 'desire' because it is something, like all desires, that admits of satisfaction. But this does not explain why the 'desire' of sexual desire is generally felt more deeply than other desires. For this reason, Shaffer's view of 'desire' seem inadequate.

Solomon and Ruddick do a better job of analyzing the meaning of 'desire' but at some sacrifice of attention to the question of its 'sexual' aspect. Thus Solomon rightly sees that sexual desire is an expressive phenomenon, which may convey all sorts of feelings, but he wrongly holds that such expressions constitute sexual messages, which communicate something sexual to another person. Solomon's view tells us something about 'desire', but virtually nothing about sexual desire. The case is much the same with Ruddick. Ruddick rightly suggests that sensual pleasure is part of the experience of sexual desire. Clearly the gain of sensual pleasure is of deep emotional appeal, and suggests a partial answer as to what the 'desire' of sexual desire is about, and why it is a precious, insistent 'desire'. But sensual pleasure is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition of sexual desire. Sexual desire may be painful or frustrating and not pleasant; sexual desire may be brutal or coarse and not sensual. What is more, the desire for sensual pleasure need not constitute a sexual desire. Were that the case, stroking a cat would constitute evidence of sexual desire.

Moulton develops no account of sexual desire per se; her argument is that sex involves different sorts of emotional states, which reflect different degrees of social involvement. Though Moulton's

idea that sexual behavior is largely a function of the familiarity of sexual partners seems questionable, the distinction she draws between sexual excitement and intimacy seems important, for it is a distinction that is telling about sexual desire. If sexual desire is not seductive behavior, it is nonetheless behavior that is shaped by the demand for sensual pleasure. If sexual desire is not intimate behavior, it is nonetheless behavior that typically conveys intimate feelings, feelings which are judged "deep". Like a seductive encounter, sexual desire is often a "novel" experience, a departure from ordinary states of consciousness. Like a long-term relationship, sexual desire is a "familiar" experience, for the feelings expressed are characteristic, personal ones; they are not inventions of the moment. Hence sexual desire shares characteristics with the types of sexual behavior Moulton proposes, without confirming her view that there are two types of sexual behavior.

If Moulton's view suggests that sexual desire may be felt or experienced in different ways, it is not a view that provides definitive answers to our two questions concerning sexual desire. The fact that sexual desire may be experienced as "novel" or, as Sartre has it, as an "incarnation of consciousness", does not show why sexual desire is <u>sexual</u>. The fact that sexual desire may be a "familiar" experience does not show the sense in which sexual desire is a <u>desire</u>.

To confirm that sexual desire is sexual, what is required is some statement as to behavioral conditions--yet none of the philosophers we have examined develop a sufficient account of such conditions. To confirm that sexual desire is a desire, what is required is a statement about the precise motive of sexual desire--or the

unique feeling that is associated with it. Yet none of the philosophers we have examined develop a sufficient account of such motives or feelings. The 'desire' of sexual desire may be expressive, it may be part of a sensually pleasurable experience, it may display a strain between the feelings of arousal and intimacy that are associated with it. These are all imperfect characterizations, for the 'desire' of sexual desire may be like this, but it may be otherwise. Sexual desire may be dull, not expressive; sexual desire may be coarse and unpleasant, not sensual and pleasurable; it may be emotionally strained. It depends on the case.

The philosophical difficulty of specifying either the motive or the conditions for sexual desire should not lead to pessimism, but to a sort of methodological skepticism. A behavioral account of sexual desire is a difficult project because of the difficulty of characterizing sexual behavior. If we rely on mere observation, we may be uncertain whether a given piece of behavior--even a given 'desire'--is sexual or not. Janice Moulton expresses this dilemma very clearly: "Some kissing is sexual; some is not. Sometimes looking is sexual; sometimes not looking is sexual". It is difficult to know what to look for.

The case is much the same with the attempt to account for the motive of sexual desire. For one thing, the motive of sexual desire may be--as psychoanalysts remind us--hidden, or unavailable to consciousness. For another, sexual desire is--perhaps more than other desires--a plastic sort of motive, one that is easily associated with all sorts of other motives with which it may become confused. Hence though the 'desire' of sexual desire may be--is often thought to be--

propelled by the motive of 'conquest', it may as easily be propelled by a motive of 'conciliation'. If it is difficult to characterize sexual desire as a behavioral state, it is also difficult to characterize the essential motive or 'desire' of sexual desire. If the behavioral conditions of sexual desire are often ambiguous, the precise motive (or motives) bearing on a given sexual desire may be extraordinarily difficult to pin down, especially so since sexual motivation is often characterized by a large degree of ambivalence. While these problems are perhaps not insuperable, they do suggest the difficulty involved in putting forth a convincing descriptive model of sexual desire.

FOOTNOTES

Section B. Robert Solomon, "Sexual Paradigms", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXXI, No. 1, June 3, 1974.
1. p. 349
2. p. 338
3. p. 343
4. p. 345

Section C. Alan Goldman, "Plain Sex", Philosophy and Public Affairs, Vol. VI, No. 3, Fall 1977.
1. p. 267
2. p. 275
3. p. 268

Section D. Jerome Shaffer, "Sexual Desire", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXXV, No. 4, April, 1978.
1. p. 178
2. p. 183
3. p. 177
4. p. 177
5. p. 177
6. p. 177
7. p. 184
8. p. 185
9. p. 186-7
10. p. 187
11. p. 181

Section E. Sara Ruddick, "Better Sex", in Sex and Philosophy, ed. Baker and Ellison, Prometheus Press, 1975.
1. p. 87
2. p. 87
3. p. 87

Section F. Janice Moulton, "Sexual Behavior: Another Position", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXXIII, No. 16, Sept. 1976.
1. p. 538
2. p. 539
3. p. 539
4. p. 539

Section G. Ibid., Janice Moulton, p. 537

CHAPTER TWO

Perhaps of all human activities sex is the least amenable to moral prescriptions or to generalizations about the normal.

Daniel Boorstin, The American Experience

Section A: Introduction

In Chapter Two we examine two contemporary views as to the moral worth of sexual desire, those of Thomas Nagel and Sara Ruddick. Both theorists offer, not simply a description of sexual desire, but an account of its value as an experience. For Nagel and Ruddick, sexual desire is not simply a desire for tactile or sensual pleasure, nor is it merely a desire for bodily orgasm. Rather it is a morally valuable experience which involves the mutual attention and mutual respect of sexual partners. The theorists we examined in Chapter One attempted to construct a descriptive paradigm of sexual desire; here we examine two recent attempts to construct a prescriptive or normative paradigm of sexual desire.

Section B: Thomas Nagel's View

In his essay, "Sexual Perversion", Thomas Nagel distinguishes between "paradigm" and "perverse" sexual desire. On Nagel's view, "paradigm" sexual desire is interpersonal desire, and it possesses a characteristic "psychological structure", or form. Sexual desire which is either not interpersonal, or else lacks this characteristic form, is deficient; it is "perverse". On Nagel's view "perverse" sexual desire, though not necessarily blameworthy, is not as beneficent as "paradigm" sexual desire.

Nagel identifies "paradigm" sexual desire in terms of object and aim. The object of sexual desire--the thing that enables one to realize the aim of desire--is, on Nagel's view, always another person. In apparent disregard of auto-erotic desire, Nagel claims it is a fact that "sexual desire is a feeling about other persons".[1] On Nagel's view, the object of desire is not just any person, nor is

it some or even all of the qualities of a particular person. Rather, the object of desire is always "a particular individual, who transcends the properties that make him attractive".[2] Hence it is Nagel's view that, paradigmatically, the object of desire is a particular person, who is valued in his or her own right. Nagel's emphasis on the exclusiveness of the object of desire suggests that he is describing, not sexual desire, but sexual love; this is a suspicion not put to rest by his further analysis.

For Nagel, the paradigm aim of sexual desire is "mutual arousal". "Mutual arousal" is conceived by Nagel as a complex structure of awareness. "Mutual arousal" involves an increase of sexual awareness between two persons, such that both reach a point at which some more "complete" expression of their sexual desire for one another becomes inevitable. On Nagel's view "mutual arousal" is an experience that persons share: in the paradigm case, "there is a complex system of superimposed mutual perceptions--not only perceptions of the sexual object, but perceptions of oneself".[3] Paradigmatically, the aim of sexual desire can be realized, or "completed", only through a mutual experience, however momentary that experience might be. On Nagel's account, it is the mutuality of "mutual arousal" that "completes" sexual desire. Sexual partners who experience "mutual arousal" move toward the "completion" of their <u>relation</u>, not the "completion" of their personal desires.

Again, it seems clear that Nagel is not talking about the mere satisfaction of sexual desire, for that is something that need not involve another person. But even in the context of an interpersonal relation, satisfying one's sexual desire need not require much in

the way of sharing, and certainly not the sort of simultaneous "mutual arousal" that constitutes Nagel's paradigm. For Nagel, such persons--persons who consummate their sexual desire either by themselves or in ways which are inattentive to their partners--are sexually "perverse". They are "perverse" in the sense that their desires are deficient in aim. Having missed the aim of "mutual arousal", their desire remains "incomplete".

Nagel's thinking regarding the structural "completeness" of sexual desire is made clear in an analogy he develops between sexual desire and anger. For Nagel, anger, like sexual desire, is a state of awareness that is not "complete" if it is not shared with another person. Hence Nagel says: "if I am angry with someone, I want to make him feel it".[4] This seems an arbitrary contention, however. Persons who are angry with another may, for whatever reason, choose not to express their anger. If they do express their anger, they may express it in a way that conveys indifference to another person. Nagel is suggesting that anger, blindly vented this way, is less genuine as 'anger', than is anger which is shared with another. On Nagel's account, it is not enough to simply express one's anger; one must share the experience of it with another, by making another "feel it". Hence it is Nagel's view that there is a structure or "logic" to anger, such that, if anger is genuine, it must be shared with another. By analogy, Nagel argues that sexual desire displays the same structure: sexual desire "involves a desire that one's partner be aroused by the recognition of one's desire that he or she be aroused".[5] To be authentic, sexual desire must be "complete", a condition that can only be met if partners attain the paradigmatic uniformity of aim

that characterizes "mutual arousal".

Nagel depicts "mutual arousal" as a state that involves physical as well as perceptual aspects. Partners not only become more and more aware of one another, they become more and more embodied in their awareness. As Nagel puts it, "desire is...not merely the perception of a pre-existing embodiment of the other, but ideally a contribution to his further embodiment..."[6] In other words, Nagel thinks that, ideally or paradigmatically, the physical and perceptual aspects of "mutual arousal" dovetail, in such a way that partners become very aware as well as physically very excited at the same time. On Nagel's view, there is a kind of causal reciprocity at work here, such that increased awareness provokes increased physical excitement, and increased physical excitement provokes increased awareness. Both the physical and the perceptual aspects of "mutual arousal" display the same structure, for both aspects of "mutual arousal" advance the partners toward the "completion" of their desire.

On Nagel's account of "mutual arousal", it would seem that the physical and conscious aspects of sexual arousal are well-orchestrated, since both aspects of "arousal" display the same "logic". It seems clear, however, that this is often not the case. Sometimes persons who are physically aroused may be so carried away that they are unable to be fully attentive to their partner in the way suggested by Nagel's paradigm. Physical excitement may, at times, become manifest in an attitude of self-absorption, an attitude that seems quite incompatible with the interpersonal awareness that Nagel requires. What is more, it is quite possible that the enhanced awareness that

partners have for each other will not trigger physical arousal in the rather seamless way Nagel's account suggests. Some persons are more likely to become embodied in their desire if they can maintain a sense of their partner's mystery. If perceptual awareness is a necessary correlate of physical embodiment, why is it so often the case that sexual partners turn the lights out?

It seems the case that for many persons sexual arousal has less to do with reaching an advanced, intense state of perceptual awareness than it does with the raising of sexual feelings. Regular sexual partners, in particular, may be thoroughly acquainted with one another in a perceptual sense, having apprehended one another on countless occasions; sexual arousal, for them, may have less to do with the expanding awareness they have for each other than with the familiar feelings they have for each other. Though the depth of the feelings of regular partners might be even more valuable--in some sense--than the intensity of awareness of Nagel's paradigm partners, Nagel's position would appear to require him to judge that their sexual relation is "perverse", if it does not involve "mutual arousal".

Nagel characterizes the state of "mutual arousal" by claiming that it is a state which involves the expression of "involuntary" impulses, adding that, "ideally, deliberate control is needed only to guide the expression of those impulses".[7] Elsewhere he claims that "in sexual desire and its expression the blending of involuntary response with deliberate control is extremely important".[8] In other words, to maintain paradigm "mutual arousal" it will be necessary that the partners neither lapse into unguided impulsiveness nor behave in a deliberate, non-impulsive way. They must chart a middle course, and "blend" their impulses with the minimum of control that

Nagel requires, if they are to keep their impulses from veering away from the contour of a shared experience. Either too much control or too much impulsiveness threatens the mutuality of "mutual arousal".

In this vein Nagel, much like Sartre, suggests that a movement toward the deliberate control of arousal is tantamount to a movement toward sadism: in emphasizing control, one focusses on manipulating the impulses of one's partner, without regard for his or her awareness as a conscious being. Also like Sartre, Nagel suggests that a movement toward abandonment of control--which occurs if one concentrates upon one's own involuntary impulses, and regards one's partner as the agent of those impulses--is a movement in the direction of masochism.

Though Nagel finds both sadism and masochism to be "perversions" of sexual desire, it seems important to recognize that ordinary sexual partners may be unable to avoid the shift of awareness implied by these sorts of "movement". For example, partners who are approaching orgasm may be carried away by the intensity as well as the involuntariness of their own arousal, in such a way as to lose the ability to "guide the expression" of their impulses. If they are momentarily fascinated by the physical experience that overtakes them, their desire appears, on Nagel's view, as momentarily "perverse". On the other hand, partners who are too attentive to their technique--even if they are so for the purpose of enhancing the arousal of their partner--also seem "perverse", since their studied attention to technique may interfere with--rather than guide--the expression of their impulses. On Nagel's view, attention to technique constitutes a lapse, because it involves shifting one's attention

away from the spontaneous expression of desire. But there may be some value in technique per se; certainly that is the assumption made by many marriage counselors, who counsel the use of technique as a way of improving the quality of sexual relations between married partners. Nagel's paradigm has the disadvantage of making efforts of this sort seem misguided in principle.

Nagel's conception of "mutual arousal" seems restrictive in other ways as well. On the paradigm, as partners become aroused, they are each aroused by the awareness of each other's desire. This seems a restrictive condition, since it may often be the case that partners become aroused by a certain resistance, or reluctance, on the part of their partner, rather than by their partner's ability to read exactly what it is they have in mind. A certain degree of playful struggle may seem like something that adds to the value of sexual arousal, but it is something that is hard to assimilate to Nagel's paradigm, which supposes that the sexual desires of partners will be symmetrical, with the desire of each partner mirroring that of the other.

In depicting "mutual arousal", Nagel suggests that "the object of awareness is the same in one's own case as it is in one's sexual awareness of another".[9] This condition seems to require that, during "mutual arousal", sexual partners become as open to one another as they are to themselves, a condition which seems unduly restrictive. It is plain that for many persons sexual arousal involves entertaining private fantasies. To ask that sexual partners become "mutually aroused" is to ask that they dispense with their private fantasies; no hint of the subjective 'opaqueness' Sartre

refers to must remain. To meet the paradigm, partners with fantasies must bring their fantasies into shared awareness--but this may be impossible due to the guilt that such fantasies occasion. The effort required seems to demand that the partners have a deep and abiding trust in one another. If so, it would seem that "mutual arousal" is an experience tailored for those who care deeply for one another, and not for ordinary sexual partners with ordinary sexual desires for one another. Once again, it seems that 'love' is the angel that underwrites Nagel's paradigm--a paradigm he offers as a standard of "adequate sexuality".[10]

In other words, Nagel's idea that sexual desire is meant to be "completed" in "mutual arousal" seems to presuppose the mutuality and openness that characterize love relations, but which need not characterize sexual relations as pursued by ordinary sexual partners. Sex that is paradigmatic for Nagel turns out to be sex that involves the mutual openness and mutual attentiveness which resemble the feelings lovers have for one another, at least ideally. Sex between partners who are open to one another, and who care for one another, is better than sex between partners who remain closed, or 'opaque' to one another.

Nagel's stress on "mutual arousal" is not an unrealistic way of evaluating sex, but it is only one of many ways of evaluating sex. Others might stress the intensity of physical pleasure that is possible through sexual relations, and thereby adopt a kind of hedonistic criterion for deciding what is better sex and what is worse sex. Still others might stress the sort of bodily spontaneity that is available through sex, as well as the possibility that sex, by discharging bodily tension, promotes health and well-being. These al-

ternate ways of evaluating sex may involve a departure from Nagel's framework: sex that is physically pleasant and physically healthy need not involve recognizing the person who is one's sexual object or pursuing the goal of "mutual arousal" with that person. In short, it seems to make as much sense to think of good sex as sex in which partners either "pleasure" or "satisfy" one another as it does to think of good sex as sex in which partners "mutually arouse" one another. Given the plasticity of sexual desire, there are no doubt other ways of evaluating sex as well.

Section C: Sara Ruddick's View

Sara Ruddick, in her essay "Better Sex", also argues that sexual experience has a particular sort of moral significance. Ruddick, echoing Nagel, claims that sex which is "complete" is "better" than sex which is "incomplete". By "better sex" Ruddick does not mean sex that is more technically accomplished or proficient, but sex that is morally better. In Ruddick's words, "better sex" is something that "anyone who is neither irrational nor anhedonic will want so long as he wants anything at all".[1]

Ruddick's account of sexual "completeness" draws from the phenomenological tradition the idea that 'sexual desire' is basically a desire for another's desire, and not simply a desire for another's body. "Completeness", suggests Ruddick, "depends on the relation of the participants to their own and each other's desire".[2]

Like Nagel, Ruddick thinks "complete" sex is sex in which partners are "mutually aroused". Ruddick offers three criteria for the sort of "mutual arousal" which affords sexual "completeness".

First, the sexual partners must each be "embodied" by sexual desire. In Ruddick's sense, "each participant submits to sexual desires that take over consciousness and direct action".[3] Second, the sexual partners must be actively committed to their embodied desire. For Ruddick, "active desiring" includes more than embodiment: "it commits the actively desiring person to her desire and requires her to identify with it--that is, to recognize herself as a sexual agent as well as respondent".[4] Persons "actively desiring" one another must be fully aware of their desires; they must be intent upon their desires in such a way that they are totally involved in their desires, and not simply distracted by them. "Active desire" is not something one simply experiences; it is something one is committed to.

Third, the sexual partners must be actively "responsive" to each other's sexual desires, not "impervious" to them. To meet Ruddick's paradigm, it is necessary that partners maintain a sort of dialogue of desire, in which neither partner's desire is recognized at the expense of the other. Each respects the other, in the sense that each honors the sort of commitment that is implicit in the other's being "identified" with their desire. In other words, both sexual partners must be thoroughly committed to their desire, yet not in such a way as to conflict with the commitment made by their partner.

Combining these three requirements, Ruddick formulates "complete sex" as sex in which "two persons embodied by sexual desire actively desire and respond to each other's desire".[5] Partners with paradigm sexual desire are partners who are "neither seducer nor seduced, neither suppliant nor benefactress, neither sadist nor victim".[6]

Ruddick claims paradigm partners will be completely committed to their desires, and give their desires complete expression. But it may be the case that sexual desires contain components that are lost to memory, or that are not available to conscious awareness. If so, it may be impossible for partners to completely avow their desires in the fashion Ruddick requires. What is more, if certain components of sexual desire are embarrassing or hostile in content, then it might be better if partners disavowed their desires, rather than actively "identified" themselves with them, as Ruddick requires.

Like Nagel, Ruddick offers a paradigm of sexual desire which suggests that the experience of desire is one in which sexual intention and sexual impulse are merged. Hence Ruddick claims that in "complete" sex "a desiring consciousness is flooded with specifically sexual feelings that eroticize all perception and movement".[7] But it often seems the case that the barrier between consciousness and flesh--or "mind" and "body"--does not dissolve so neatly, at least not in a way that contributes to the "responsiveness" that is necessary for "completeness". That there may be a problem of convergence is suggested by Ruddick's own formulation: "In complete sex impersonal spontaneous impulses govern an action that is responsive to a particular person".[8] But if sexual impulses are impersonal, it is at least unclear how becoming "embodied" by such impulses will enable persons to become "responsive" in the morally valuable way required by the paradigm.

Though Ruddick thinks that "complete", "better sex" does not involve "heroic restraint on our sexual impulses", she nonetheless allows that "completeness" is threatened by "pervasive tendencies to fantasy, to possessiveness, and to varieties of sadomasochistic

desire".[9] If in fact such tendencies pervade sexual desire, then perhaps only the model citizens among us can have sexual desires which conform with what is required by the paradigm.

Section D: Conclusion

For Nagel and Ruddick, sexual desire is an engagement. Sexual desire is something partners "embody" and "identify with"; it is something they feel to be important, something they are committed to. In expressing their sexual desires, sexual partners are putting themselves on the line. This emphasis on the passionate aspect of sexual desire is taken at the expense of much attention to the sensual aspect of sexual desire. When Nagel and Ruddick speak of the "embodiment" of sexual partners during arousal, they interpret "embodiment" as something which involves a wholehearted transformation of consciousness, not as something--a condition or state--that is a function of sensual stimulation. On their view paradigm sexual partners are "embodied" by passionate desire in such a way that they never become too distracted by the sensual pleasure they each experience.

To be persuasive a normative account of sexual desire must be practicable; it must be in tune with the psychological capacity of persons. That does not seem the case here. Nagel and Ruddick are disparaging of sexual fantasy, yet it seems the case that most persons register their sexual desires at least partly through fantasy. Through sexual fantasy, persons create, privately and imaginatively, the conditions which secure their own arousal; these are conditions often not secured through the plain apprehension of the sexual object, as is required by the paradigm. In addition, some surveys suggest that

it is relatively common for both men and women to fantasize that they are overwhelming their sexual object through their own allure; either that, or they are being overwhelmed by another's allure. If this is the case, it seems that it is relatively common for persons to take an imaginative step beyond the contours of the paradigm, and to draw pleasure from the idea of a one-sided sexual "escalation", rather than the mutual "escalation" required by the paradigm.

Nagel and Ruddick exclude sexual fantasy from their paradigm because fantasy is something which violates the openness and attentiveness, as well as the passionate commitment, which partners are expected to feel. Nagel and Ruddick highlight one aspect of sexual desire, which we may think of as its passionate aspect. They show how sexual desire may constitute a "complete" experience, an experience which involves both self-expression and mutual self-discovery. But in doing so they tend to ignore the sensual, perhaps more idle aspect of sexual desire. Hence they require that sexual partners display a special affinity for one another. They are not merely attracted by one another, they are "engaged" by one another. They are not merely sensually stimulated by one another, they are passionately "aroused" by one another.

For Nagel and Ruddick, 'sexual desire' is a way of relating to another, while expressing oneself. There is no gulf between the private expression of sexual desire and the social communication of it. Partners with sexual desires for one another are engaged in the project of revealing themselves to one another. The idea that sexual desire is partly instinctual, and thereby somewhat impersonal, is replaced by the idea that sexual desire is ultimately personal,

in that it is a vehicle of mutual self-discovery. The paradigm sex partner is one who regards the 'other', not as a sensual object, but as a subject who provides a mirror for one's own subjectivity.

Many contend this is an age that is characterized both by the fragmentation of the "self" and by the emptiness of interpersonal relations. If so, this may partly explain why sexuality has come to be thought as a way of connecting with oneself, as well as with another person. To express one's sexual desire is seen as something of double value, because it is something that constitutes a way of being open with oneself while at the same time reaching out to another. This passionate ideal--the ideal of expressive communication--forms the basis of Nagel's and Ruddick's paradigm. On their view, "better", paradigm sex is sex in which sex partners reveal themselves by openly expressing their desires for one another.

The problem with this moral paradigm is that, while it may be true that sexual experience is typically very expressive, it is also true that sexual experience is often--perhaps typically--beset by conflicts which interfere with the "complete" expression of sexual desire, as well as with its communication. Given the partly repressive character of sexual desire, the degree to which sexual desire is expressive, rather than evasive, is unclear. For many persons the sense of sexually "communicating" or connecting with another person seems completely overshadowed by an equally powerful resistance to the idea of "opening up" to another. Sometimes sexual partners perceive each other as fantasied extensions of themselves, and not as independent persons. In that event, it is true only in some thin

sense that they are "communicating" and thereby "sharing" their experience.

Even in cases where a kind of sexual "communication" takes place, it seems rash to assume that the "communication" is of a sort that is direct, truthful, and open. Persons aroused by their sexual desires may find themselves distracted by their own sensual experience, rather than revealed by it; they may lose their focus upon their sexual partner, and become "carried away" in some private sense. Sexual arousal is an experience that may raise infantile feelings--feelings originally directed toward one's parents. If we hold that such feelings are "communications"--as both Nagel and Ruddick suggest--then it is plain that the persons to whom such feelings are expressed differ from the persons to whom such feelings were originally addressed. If sex is to be thought a form of emotional "communication", then it is often a highly indirect, inauthentic sort of communication.

Once we allow that sexual desire is often accompanied by fantasies, it is difficult to maintain that the sexual encounter is simply a dialogue. In their sexual fantasies, persons tend to create scenarios that are quite different from, and sometimes diametrically opposed, to the situation they find themselves in. They tend to imagine each other in the guise of unfamiliar roles, and sometimes as different persons altogether. To include one's partner in a sexual fantasy is far more like assigning them a role in a theatrical production than it is like communicating with them directly, in an open dialogue. No doubt it would be better in some sense if sexual desire did not involve so many childish, private, and non-communicative aspects--but to the extent that it does, it seems misleading to offer

a "paradigm" that does not take account of these features.

In Chapter One we established that sexual desire is a phenomenon that is plastic as to the form of expression it takes. To that idea it must be added that sexual desire is also quite plastic in a moral sense--i.e., that it is a phenomenon that can either enhance or betray the sorts of things that adults deem valuable.

FOOTNOTES

Thomas Nagel, "Sexual Perversion", Journal of Philosophy, Vol. LXVI, No. 1, Jan. 16, 1969.

[1]p. 79.

[2]p. 80.

[3]p. 83.

[4]p. 84.

[5]p. 84.

[6]p. 84.

[7]p. 84.

[8]p. 84.

[9]p. 84.

[10]p. 87.

Sara Ruddick, "Better Sex", in Sex and Philosophy, ed. Baker and Ellison, Prometheus Press, 1975.

[1]p. 85.

[2]p. 87.

[3]p. 88.

[4]p. 89.

[5]p. 90.

[6]p. 90.

[7]p. 89.

[8]p. 98.

[9]p. 100.

CHAPTER THREE

What mad Nijinsky wrote
About Diaghilev
Is true of the normal heart;
For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love
But to be loved alone.

"September 1, 1939", by W. H. Auden

Section A: Introduction

In Chapter Three we examine the phenomenological tradition of inquiry into 'desire'. In contrast with the views expressed in Chapter One, Hegel and Sartre do not conceive of 'desire' as a behavioral state, but as a relation between subjects. For Hegel and Sartre the goal of 'desire' is not bodily contact, or sensual pleasure, or appetitive satisfaction, or in fact the attainment of any sort of behavioral state. For Hegel the goal of 'desire' is attaining a relation of a certain kind, a relation which confers subjective recognition upon those who are party to it. For Sartre, the goal of 'desire' is attaining a relation in which the pure subjectivity of subjects can stand forth. For both, 'desire' is a qualitative relation, which possesses a distinctive "logic" of its own.

Both Hegel and Sartre view the relation of 'desire' as impacted in subjectivity. It is possible to read Hegel's Phenomenology as offering a model of the dominative character of desire, a model which may be taken to suggest the dominative character of sexuality. Sartre's view of sexuality is far more explicit than Hegel's. In Being and Nothingness, Sartre claims that the relation of 'sexual desire' is inherently sado-masochistic. On Sartre's view, 'sexual desire' is a fluctuating relation in which first one subject, and then the other, objectifies and thereby dominates the 'other'; 'sexual desire' is a relation which alternately celebrates the subjective value of one or the other subject, but never of both. Mutual sexual experience, of the sort championed by Nagel and Ruddick, is thereby ruled out.

Hegel and Sartre portray subjects as placing absolute value upon their desires, in such a way that it is impossible to share this

value. Their views suggest a model of relations of 'desire' as relations in which the value of subjectivity is allocated, either to one subject or to another. Their view as to the mechanism of 'desire' reflects this conception. In 'desiring' each other, subjects project their own exclusive, subjective value onto each other, without any regard for the independent subjective value of the 'other'. Seen at this remove, 'desiring' is a rather grandiose, blind expression of subjective value. Relations of 'desire' are relations not simply of conflict, but of domination.

The idea that subjects place an uncompromising subjective value on their desires is an idea that, in fact, captures certain features of sexual desire. At least sometimes, sexual desire is among the most projective of phenomena. Persons experiencing sexual desire may have difficulty imagining the object of their desire may not reciprocate, or difficulty imagining that their desire may be unrequited. Persons, upon declaring their sexual desires for another, may be unwilling to take 'no' for an answer. In such cases, recognizing that the object of desire is a person with desires of his/her own seems completely extraneous to the experience of sexual desire. Sometimes this situation is reversed, for in other cases it may be impossible for persons to imagine that their sexual desire will be requited or reciprocated by another. Though in the latter case the experience of sexual desire may be self-effacing rather than self-aggrandizing, it is nonetheless presumptuous. One who blindly "carries a torch" for another overlooks the subjectivity of their object--who might, after all, reciprocate.

The experience of sexual desire is compatible with varying

degrees of self-esteem, ranging all the way from overweaning pride to abject humiliation. It seems important to bear in mind that sexual desire need not involve such extremes of subjective feeling, and that it is possible for persons to regard their sexual desires with modesty, as the sort of experience that is not really a life-or-death matter. The phenomenological insight as to the unshareably subjective nature of 'desire' captures the idea that sexual desire is an experience open to extremes of feeling, but it does not capture the idea that the feelings persons attach to or project upon their sexual desires need not be intensively and exclusively subjective.

For example, it would seem that, for most persons, sexual experience involves feelings of self-regard which do not fit the phenomenologist's model. Maintaining one's self-regard might involve gaining the approval of one's partner, but there is quite a difference between gaining approval and demanding one-sided recognition from one's partner, as Hegel suggests. Similarly, maintaining one's self-regard might involve seeking reassurances from one's partner, but there is quite a difference between seeking reassurance and developing the rather desperate need for security that Sartre describes, which on his view emerges in the quest to "appropriate" the 'other'. Self-regard is a feeling that seems to be supported by the recognition and reassurance of one's partner, without being totally dependent upon it. Persons who are totally dependent upon their partners for their self-regard seem desperate; if in addition they require the sacrifice of their partner's self-regard to secure their own, they seem not simply desperate but hostile. Not everyone who eyes another with sexual desire is either this desperate or this hostile.

In other words, the "logic" of dominance and subordination, does not seem necessarily involved in the experience of sexual desire; nor, by inference, does it seem to be involved in all sexual relations. Rather, it seems the case that the subjective barriers which divide persons can be lowered, if not removed entirely, in all affectionate relations and in at least some sexual relations. The sense persons may have, as isolated centers of consciousness, as "walled fortresses" onto themselves, is a sense that most persons overcome without radical effort. For many, sexual experience is, of all experience, the sort in which it is most likely that they will become open to one another, the sort of experience in which it is possible to share in each other's subjectivity, and thereby in each other's persons. It is the sort of experience which affords access to relations which are cooperative and mutual, rather than conflicting and subjective, in character. Perhaps this is because there are certain physical aspects of sexual experience which afford the opportunity to depart from ordinary states of subjective consciousness. Partners who together experience sexual arousal may feel a heightened sort of awareness, which may overwhelm their subjective perspective. Partners who experience together the autonomous, somewhat involuntary pleasure of orgasm may be quite unable to distinguish between who is "making love," and who is "being made love to". As both Thomas Nagel and Sara Ruddick point out, these are aspects of sexual experience which seem totally unrelated to the "logic" of domination, which is a "logic" drawn from a subjective perspective.

The view that 'desire' is uncompromisingly and authentically

subjective is a view that suggests that all sexual desire is imperious, and that all sexual relations are relations of conquest. To take this view is to deny the possibility of sexual love, as this is ordinarily construed. It is to deny the possibility of relations in which subjects may combine sexual desire with respect for one another, as persons. That is a rather extreme view, even among those who argue for fundamental changes in our conceptions of sexuality and sexual relationships. Nonetheless, it is a view that is implicit in Hegel's Phenomenology, and it is a view made explicit in Sartre's Being and Nothingness.

Section B: Hegel: Desire as a Relation of Mutual Domination

The "Mastery and Slavery" section of Hegel's Phenomenology of Mind can be read as an inquiry into the value of 'desire'.[1] Though Hegel focusses upon 'desire' per se, not 'sexual desire', his basic view--that 'desire' is a projection of subjective value--is one that has exerted considerable influence on Sartre and de Beauvoir, as well as such analytic philosophers as Thomas Nagel and Sara Ruddick. For each of these philosophers, the social relation of sexual desire is a matter of paramount concern, as is the question whether it is possible for sexual desire to embody moral value.

It is Hegel's view that 'desire' is a stage of human development en route to the realization of rational freedom. 'Desire' is a stage that approximates freedom, without attaining it. 'Desire' falls short of freedom because it is a stage that is ensnarled in the contradiction of mastery and slavery--the very antithesis of rational freedom. 'Desire' embodies the contradiction of mastery and slavery

quite neatly. 'Desire' signals mastery, for what it claims is claimed in an imperious and uncompromising manner. 'Desire' signals slavery, for its claim is both fragile and precarious; it is a claim that cannot be satisfied without relying--and therefore depending--on another. On Hegel's view, then, 'desire' bears the contradictions of mastery and slavery--it is both independent and dependent, both imperious and helpless, both certain and insecure.

For Hegel, the contradictory aspects of 'desire' are manifest in a relation between two subjects. This relation is in a sense doomed, since the sort of freedom both subjects seek is unshareable and exclusive: it is the freedom to place one's desire above that of another. Hence the relation of 'desire' is a sort of power relation. What is at stake is the freedom to impose one's will--or 'desire'--on another. This is not the rational, "true" freedom that is at the capstone of the Hegelian dialectic; it is--to Hegel--a more primitive, inchoate sort of freedom. It is political rather than moral, selfish rather than transcendent. It is imbued with the spirit of a consciousness that is "false" rather than "true", for it issues from subjects who are not fully self-conscious. These subjects are on Hegel's view not yet fully human. They are less like free persons than like appendages of the 'desire' that binds them in relation.

But if the subjects Hegel conceives are not fully human, they seem no less real for that, for they are recognizable as passionate beings. The contradictory aspects of 'desire', which Hegel captures in the figure of mastery and slavery, are aspects--though perhaps not determinative aspects--of human desire, and especially of human sexual desire. Human desire is often overweaning and uncompromising,

yet at the same time it is--and must be--subject to compromise, for the satisfaction of desire requires an agreeable object. Human desire might be thought to raise the question of human autonomy, and to balance this question with the question of human interdependence. It is to the extent that such questions or conflicts of value are entailed by human desire, that Hegel's "dialectic of desire" acquires its explanatory power.

For Hegel, the demand made by 'desire' is not like the demand made by 'appetite'. 'Appetite' is animal-like, 'desire' is human. 'Appetite' is satisfied under naturally occuring conditions. The objects of an 'appetite' occur in nature, and these objects--in Hegel's sense--"determine the content" of the appetitive relation. In contrast, the objects of human 'desire' are not, strictly speaking, "natural", for while they may occur in nature, they are on Hegel's view bound to a reality that is essentially human. The human characteristic of 'desire' is marked by the fact that its object is not mute but human. The objects of human 'desire' are in fact other human desires.

On Hegel's view of 'desire', the 'desires' of subjects are assumed to conflict with one another. Pre-self-conscious subjects are in a relation of "primitive antagonism" with one another. Hence their 'desires' are tied to a human reality which is essentially antagonistic. Unlike 'appetite', which if nature provides may be satisfied in an immediate way, the satisfaction of 'desire' is mediated by the reality of human conflict. 'Desire' is thus a more precarious sort of demand than 'appetite'. The conditions of satisfying an 'appetite' are given in nature, while the conditions for satisfying

'desire' inhere in human volition, which is arbitrary. The object of 'desire' is not something given in nature, but something which resembles in character the very 'desire' which demands it. In this sense, the relation of 'desire' appears inherently less stable than the relation of 'appetite'.

In this vein Kojeve, interpreting Hegel, claims that one with 'appetite' consumes the 'appetite's' object, and thereby becomes "what it is". In contrast, one with 'desire' "assimilates" or "transforms" the object, and thereby becomes "what it is not".[2] This suggests, again, that the relation of 'appetite' is immediate, and that the relation of 'desire' is mediated. While the object of an 'appetite' is the 'appetite', the object of a 'desire' is not the 'desire' as is, for it is modified or in some way altered by the 'desire'. What is more, the 'mediation' of 'desire' and its object is reciprocal. Not only is the object of 'desire' altered by the 'desire', the 'desire' is altered by its object. Hence, Kojeve claims the "content" as well as the "conditions of satisfaction" vary within the relation of 'desire', but not within the 'appetitive' relation. By this Kojeve appears to mean that, while both 'desire' and its object are transformed in the relation of 'desire', neither 'appetite'nor its object is transformed in relation of 'appetite'. In this sense, 'desire' might be thought a more dynamic sort of demand than 'appetite'.

There is one more contrast to be drawn between Hegel's conception of 'desire' and 'appetite', though it is largely a formal one. 'Appetites' are for the different things supplied by nature. 'Desire', in contrast, is for a single, non-natural thing, a thing that is in a logical sense similar to 'desire'. The subject who desires

transforms what he desires by desiring it, and thereby transforms as well the character of his desire. Hence 'what' he desires as well as his 'desire' are logically similar: both are indeterminate values in a dialectical relation. In other words it is Hegel's view that where 'appetite' is directed toward natural objects, 'desire' is directed toward another version of itself. All 'desire' is the 'desire of desire'.

Kojeve clarifies the notion of 'desiring desire' using as an example the case of sexual desire:

> Thus in the relationship between man and woman... Desire is human only if one desires, not the Body, but the Desire of the other; if (one) wants "to possess" or "to assimilate" the Desire taken as Desire--that is to say, if (one) wants to be "desired" or "loved", or rather, "recognized" in (one's) human value, in (one's) reality as a human individual.3

In this example, desire acquires its value within the sexual relation between man and woman, though in general it is Hegel's idea that any 'desire' acquires its value within a relation. In the example the value of the sexual 'desire' and the value of 'what is desired' are not independent, but rather interdependent values. Sexual 'desire' alone is of no value unless one is desired in turn; 'being desired' alone is of no value unless one desires. Hence the value of 'desire' per se can only be realized in reciprocity. If 'desire' is to have any value at all, one's 'desire' must be recognized or mirrored in the 'desire' of another. The human value of 'desire' is dependent on the "recognition" of another.

It is Hegel's assumption, however, that subjects are initially in a relation of "primitive antagonism" with one another. In this initial stage, no subject is a mirror to another, and reciprocity

is impossible, for all subjects seek the value of 'desire' for their very own. The problem Hegel posits would perhaps not be so great if subjects sought to gratify their desires, rather than sought to attain the value of 'desire'. Because 'desire' seeks the value of 'desire', not just gratification, the demand made by 'desire' is necessarily uncompromising--it is a demand without empirical limit. Each subject, by 'desiring desire', claims the total value of another subject's 'desire'. Since subjects stand in an antagonistic relation with one another, the value of their 'desire' is characteristically exclusive, and cannot be shared. Thus the claim for another's 'desire' is in effect a demand for his characteristic value--which is for Hegel tantamount to his "freedom". To 'desire the desire' of another is to claim the value of another as one's own, which is a form of enslavement.

To 'desire the desire' of another is thereby to force one's 'desire' on another. Psychologists suggest a plausible reason, though a defensive one, for forcing one's desires on another. One attributes one's desires to another in order to deny that one has those desires. This has been termed the mechanism of "projection and denial".[4] Hegel's conception is very nearly the opposite: one forces one's desires on another not for the purpose of denying those desires, but for the purpose of having one's 'desire' recognized. If in the case of "projection and denial" one attributes one's desires to another, in the case of Hegelian 'desire' one attributes the value of one's 'desire' to another. Hegelian 'desire' is aggressive, not defensive in nature: the point is not to deny one's desires, but to affirm the value of one's 'desire'.

Hegel's notion of 'desire' differs from "projection and denial" in a second way. In "projection and denial" one is limited by the particular feelings one has, as well as by the particular psychological state one is in. On Hegel's notion, 'desire' is primarily a transcendent claim. Since it is the value of 'desire', and not gratification, that one demands of another, one in effect forces one's values on another, not simply one's desires. Because this is an uncompromising sort of demand, it seems even more ruthless than the attempt to impose particular desires on another. Hegelian 'desire' is a desire that demands total subordination, not mere acquiesence. By projecting the value of one's 'desire' onto another, one in effect substitutes one's values for those of another, and denies their value entirely.

Kojeve clarifies the absolute character of the claim made by 'desire': "To desire a Desire is to want to substitute oneself for the value desired by this Desire".[5] In other words, to 'desire a desire' is to desire a state of affairs in which one is the value of another's 'desire', in which case one is recognized. But this involves denying that the 'other' is a subject with values of his own. By 'desiring another's desire', one in effect says: "I am the desire you desire". This claim obliterates the sense in which the 'other' is agent to his 'desire'. If one constitutes the sole value of the 'desire' of another, it follows the 'other's' 'desire' is without value of its own, since it is of value only to the extent that it is 'desired'. In other words, to 'desire another's desire' is to project one's value onto another, which entails defining him as a subject whose 'desire' is without value. To project one's 'desire' onto

another is to define him a slave to one's 'desire'.

Hegel's notion of 'desire' is incompatible with attempts to provoke or excite the 'desire' of another. That motive makes sense only if the 'other' is the author or agent of his 'desire', and has a value independent of the relation of 'desire'. But since it is Hegel's view that both subjects mediate their value within the relation of 'desire', their value is determined by this relation, not presupposed by it. As Kojeve suggests, Hegel's thought is that, by 'desiring another's desire', one seeks a version of oneself that is of human value.[6] In other words, the subjects' attempt to 'desire the desire' of one another does not presuppose their own independent value, since the relation of 'desire' embodies their attempt to gain such value. Their 'desire of desire' is in effect their first stab at human recognition and freedom.

Ironically, their bid for freedom leads to slavery. Let us review how this occurs, i.e., how 'desire' becomes ensnarled in the contradiction of mastery and slavery. Two subjects confront one another in the relation of 'desire'. Each 'desires the desire' of the other; each wants to be recognized. Each asserts a ruthless claim against the other; each wants to impose his value on the other. Hegel's view of this conflict is that it is a matter of life and death, since--he assumes--the willingness to risk life for value is a characteristic that is essentially human. A battle takes place. The loser of the battle henceforth bears the value of the winner's 'desire'--he is on that score constituted a 'slave'. In losing, the value of his 'desire' has been displaced by the value of the 'desire' of the winner, and is repressed. Henceforth the winner is acknowledged the 'master'.

In the relation of 'master' and 'slave', Kojeve suggests, the 'slave' is remanded to the "natural world of things".[7] This, however, is an imperfect characterization. The 'slave' is not a natural thing, for he is certainly not the object of an 'appetite'. In fact the 'slave' is a psychological object, for in bearing the value of the 'master's' 'desire' he is in effect an extension of the 'master's' 'desire'. Within their relation, the 'slave' is a subject who has repressed the value of his own 'desire'. It is in this sense that the 'slave' is accounted a 'dependent consciousness', for the sort of "consciousness" he has depends on the value of the 'master's' 'desire'.

The relation between 'slave' and 'master' is ironic. If the 'master' has succeeded in creating a "dependent consciousness", he has also succeeded in creating a tenuous mastery. In attempting to realize his 'desire', the 'master' has become dependent on the 'slave'. If the 'slave' in some sense belongs to the 'master', it is also true that the 'master' in some sense belongs to the 'slave'. If the 'slave' is a "dependent consciousness", the 'master' is himself dependent on this "dependent consciousness", and in this important sense, his mastery remains incomplete.

Thus both 'master' and 'slave' are dependent upon each other: the 'master' requires the recognition of the 'slave', the 'slave' requires the "consciousness" of the 'master'. Yet neither is satisfied, for neither has achieved a version of himself that is of human value; neither has realized his 'desire'. The 'master', since he is recognized by a "dependent consciousness", in effect remains unrecognized. What is the value of 'being recognized' if recognition

is granted by a 'slave'? The 'slave's' predicament is little better, for he is a "dependent consciousness" whose consciousness is dependent on the value of the 'master's' 'desire'.

In their struggle, both subjects sought to create a version of themselves that was of human value. Now--ensnarled in the relation of 'master' and 'slave'--both are dependent on one another in a relation which denies their essential humanity. The 'master' has not realized his 'desire', since his 'desire' now forms the material that is transformed or "finished off" by the 'slave'--who works on and "gives shape" to it. Hence the 'master' does not find another version of himself, which is what he sought, but instead "finds himself" through the 'slave's' work--work which has for its material his own unrealized 'desire'. The value of the 'master's' unrealized 'desire', though in some sense a significant contribution of its own, is enhanced by the work of the 'slave', which "completes" and "realizes" it. In this sense, the 'master' "finds himself" in the 'slave'.

The 'slave' is no better off. Qua 'slave', he is forced to repress the value of his own desire, and to pretend the value of the 'master's' 'desire' is his own. On that account, he is quite far from attaining the version of himself he sought. The 'work' he is consigned to is "giving shape" to the 'master's' 'desire'; it is 'work' the material of which is the value of the 'master's' 'desire'. Hence if the 'master' cannot avoid "finding himself" in the 'slave', the 'slave' cannot avoid "finding himself" in the 'master' either.

Hegel thinks this quandary can be resolved, and that both 'master' and 'slave' can attain a version of themselves that is of human value. For this to happen the contradiction that inheres in

the relation must be heightened: the 'master' who merely "finds himself" in the 'slave' must realize the "truth" of his slavery, and the 'slave' must likewise realize the "truth" of his mastery. According to Hegel, the clue to resolving the quandary of 'desire' is supplied by the 'slave's' 'work'. For Hegel, 'work', like 'desire', is a distinctively human capacity. As Kojeve suggests, a subject "may overcome its attachment to natural existence" [8] through 'work', as well as through 'desire'. 'Work' is for Hegel an activity which contributes to the value of the 'master's' 'desire'; it "gives shape" to the 'master's desire'; it "completes" it. Hegel thinks of 'work' as antithetical to 'desire'. If 'desire' is "evanescent" or transient, and lacks permanence, 'work' is "desire restrained and checked, evanescence delayed and postponed".[9] Hence 'work' is thought the dialectical counterpart of 'desire': 'work' is repressed 'desire'. In this sense, the value of the 'slave's' 'work' is commensurate with the value of the 'master's' 'desire'. If only the 'master' and 'slave' would realize this "truth", their relation would dissolve, for it would be clear that both 'master' and 'slave' were subjects sharing commensurate human value. It would be clear, then, that the 'master's' 'desire' makes an abstract contribution of human value, and that the 'slave's' 'work' makes a complementary, concrete contribution of human value. It would be clear that, as George Kelly has put it, "the Slave invents history, but only after the Master has made humanity possible".[10]

For this "realization" to occur, however, certain conditions must obtain, and, whatever the pull of Hegel's dialectic, these conditions seem psychologically implausible. The 'master' must be

terribly insecure with his mastery, or perhaps bored with the leisure it affords, if he is to gainsay his 'desire'--even his unrealized 'desire'--and acknowledge that the 'slave's' contribution is what constitutes its "truth". What is more, the 'slave' must completely internalize the 'master's' unrealized 'desire', and completely repress his own, if his 'work' is to count as the dialectical counterpart of the 'master's' 'desire' in such a way that it constitutes its "truth". It is only after the 'slave' has become a perfect 'slave'--in the sense that he has completely repressed his own unrealized 'desire'--that he is in position to transform the value of his unrealized 'desire' into the "concrete activity" of 'work'. (A psychoanalytic comment on this situation might be, that while the sublimation of repressed desire is certainly possible, it is under ordinary conditions quite difficult.) But if the 'slave' is unable to sublimate his repressed 'desire' in the rather perfect way Hegel requires, he will be unable to acknowledge the "truth" of his contribution; and if that is the case, he will remain a 'slave', locked in a relation which allows him to "find himself" in mastery, but which denies him the "truth" of his humanity.

In short, what are for Hegel conditions which precipitate a relation between equals, a relation in which the 'desire' of both subjects can be realized, seem more like conditions which maintain the one-sided character of the relation of 'desire', conditions which pose barriers to the realization of either subjects' 'desire'. If that is the case, then what endures in Hegel's account of the relation of 'desire' is a model as to the dominative character of 'desire'. Viewed this way, 'desire' is a relation in which one subject projects

the value of his 'desire' onto another, and the 'other' foresakes or represses his 'desire', thereby denying its value. Their relation is marked by a one-sided allocation of value in which the repression of one subject's 'desire' is made--on pain of death--to complement the projection of the other subject's 'desire'.

If we think of the 'master' 'slave' relation in connection with sexual relations between 'man' and 'woman'--as does Simone de Beauvoir--then Hegel's model of 'desire' as an impacted relation, a moral quandary, acquires an added plausibility. 'Man' 'woman' relations may be thought relations which, typically, underscore the value of 'man's' desires and minimize the value of 'woman's' desires. If 'man's' desires tend to receive prominent recognition, 'woman's' desires tend to be gainsaid--perhaps repressed, perhaps displaced, perhaps sublimated--but in any event redirected along lines that have not received the prominent recognition accorded 'man's' desires. In this sense--de Beauvoir's sense--the relation of 'man' and 'woman' remains locked in a pre-historical, dominative mode. If we discount the optimism which History is accorded through the figure of the 'slave's' 'work', what we are left with is a model of the quandary of 'desire' that endures.

Hegel's view of 'reproductive' "copulation", which is set forth in his Philosophy of Nature, seems to suggest that his view of the dominative character of 'desire' also extends to 'sexual desire'. In that work, Hegel construes reproductive "copulation" as a transcendental activity--an activity in which it is possible for "subjects" to attain a "sense of kind" with the human species. For Hegel, copulation" involves a subject's "desire to find a sense of himself in

another individual of his species...and thus to incorporate the kind within his own nature and bring it into existence".[11]

However, as Simone de Beauvoir has made clear, Hegel has in mind male subjects; female subjects are 'other' to him. It is male subjects who "find the sense" of themselves; it is male subjects who project themselves as one with the human species. Like Aristotle, Hegel mistakenly thinks that only males have an active role in biological reproduction; females merely provide a reproductive medium for male semen. Hence, "copulation" "completes" the 'sexual desire' of the male subject, not the female. Hegel's view as to the contribution of the female subject is strikingly similar to his view of the 'slave's' contribution to the 'master's' 'desire'. The female body is the medium of male 'desire'; it is something which "gives shape to" male 'desire', much as the 'slave's' 'work' "gives shape to" the 'master's' 'desire'. Though Hegel's view is biologically incorrect--for it is a view formed in ignorance of the equal genetic contributions made by male and female--it is a view which underscores his idea that the dominative character of 'desire' extends to sexual desire.

Though Hegel suggests that it is possible to transcend the dominative character of 'desire', that suggestion is not born out on his analysis of romantic relations. In "On Love" Hegel investigates the phenomenon of love, without showing how subjects who love one another can transcend the quandary of 'desire'. "Love', it seems, is a relation that can be attained without the need for a dialectical scaffold. Thus Hegel holds that 'love' "excludes all oppositions" adding that, in 'love' "all distinction between the lovers is annulled".[12] Were that the case, however, there would be no basis

for the conflicts of value captured in his model of 'desire'--a model which assumes that the quest for value begins in antagonism, in an inchoate state of affairs, in which subjects seek their own recognition and value.

Hegel's view of 'love' seems to exclude the possibility that subjects who love one another do, in fact, sexually 'desire' one another. If that is the case, all would-be lovers are faced with a Hobson's choice: either Platonic relations, in which 'desire' is absent, or relations of mastery and slavery, in which 'desire' is present. Hegel's insight that 'desire' is a dominative relation is not well served by his idealized account of 'love' since, if we allow Hegel's view of 'desire', then, strictly speaking, there is no possibility for relations of sexual love, in the sense in which this is ordinarily construed--i.e., as a relation of moral value in which partners recognize each other, equally, in their desires.

It might seem that Hegel's conception of 'love', like his conception of 'work', can count as a possible solution to the quandary of 'desire'. But Hegel's position in the Phenomenology would appear to rule out this interpretation. Hegel implies that the transcendental value of 'work' is manifest only if the 'slave' totally represses the value of his 'desire', thereby sublimating that value into his 'work'. If that is the case, the implications for 'love' seem clear: 'love' requires that--at least--one partner totally repress the value of his 'desire'. That seems like a very hazardous approach to genuine sexual love, for it leaves open the possibility of relations that pivot between the blind devotion of one partner and the overweaning desires of the other. While many sexual relations, or relationships,

may pivot in this fashion, it would be hard to claim that such relations are of intrinsic moral value, for they do not appear to be relations characterized by mutual respect.

Section C: Sartre: Sexual Desire as a Sado-Masochistic Relation

On Hegel's view of 'desire', subjects seek a version of themselves that is truly human--only to find themselves ensnared in the roles of 'master' and 'slave'. Hegel thinks that at a certain point the absurdity of this exaggerated sort of relation will be obvious, and the "truth" it masks will become apparent. Sartre's notion of 'desire' is similar, except that Sartre sees no escape from this relational dilemna. Sartre, Like Hegel, finds 'desire' to entail vaunting yet irreconcilable human values. To 'desire' is for Sartre to strive to "complete" one's value, to attain a version of oneself that is both 'free' and 'recognized' as such--a version of oneself that is authentically human. But for Sartre the project of 'desire' is doomed. Given its firm basis in ontology, neither history nor the "truth" of self consciousness can surmount--or "transcend"--the dilemna of 'desire'.

In Being and Nothingness Sartre develops an account of 'desire' that, like Hegel's account in the Phenomenology, is essentially evaluative. 'Desire' is directed toward a transcendental object--the attainment of human freedom. Moreover, Sartre's goal of 'freedom', like Hegel's goal of 'recognition', is thought to be in an immediate sense impossible to attain. Hence Sartre, like Hegel, views the relation of 'desire' as an impacted relation which resists resolution. 'Desire', bidding for 'freedom', precipitates slavery.

For Hegel, 'desire' is the 'desire of desire', which is in effect a desire for human recognition. In the relation of 'desire',

subjects project the value they seek onto each other, and this forces their relation into an impasse, at which neither subject apprehends his "truth". Only the advent of history, epitomized by the 'work' of the 'slave', can unblock the destructive relation of 'desire'. Hence Hegel's view is that the quandary of 'desire' can be resolved intellectually, through the apprehension of the "truth". 'Desire' is but a stage that subjects pass through, in their ascent to self-consciousness.

For Sartre, the problem raised by 'desire' cannot be resolved intellectually, either through apprehending the "truth" or through acquiring further knowledge. Nor does history intrude. That is because the problem raised by 'desire' is seen as a problem intrinsic to consciousness. It is raised by the structure of intersubjective being, which Sartre construes in such a way that each subject is in principle dependent on the existence of an 'other' who confounds the subject with his mere presence, an 'other' who, always and everywhere, challenges the transcendence of each subject, the capacity of each subject to reaffirm his or her own freedom. For Sartre the transcendental freedom that is the intrinsic goal of 'desire' is a freedom that, unlike the transcendental goal of recognition, remains in principle "out of reach".

For Sartre, transcendental freedom is self-conscious freedom. Though within the Cartesian tradition, it is generally assumed that subjects have a privileged access to their self-consciousness, Sartre reverses that assumption, and instead suggests that self-consciousness is something to which the 'other' has privileged access. As Robert Cumming has put it:

> Consciousness of myself is something of which the other is conscious but of which I cannot become conscious. His consciousness of me transcends my consciousness, because I have become for him the object that I can never become for myself.1

Hence for Sartre one's self-consciousness remains in an objective sense outside one's subjective grasp, since it inheres in the point of view of the 'other'. Since no subject can attain the 'other's' point of view, no subject can attain a self-consciousness that is in principle 'complete'.

For Sartre, this predicament--the predicament of a self-consciousness that is free, yet dependent upon the 'other'--constitutes the predicament of 'desire'. It is the predicament that all subjects attempt to escape through their 'desires'. All 'desire' is desire for the 'complete' freedom of self-consciousness, but this is thought to be something that is impossible to attain. Hence all 'desire' is in principle a failure. The failure of 'desire' is not an epistemological failure, but an ontological one. Unlike Hegel, whose version of dialectic suggests that the slavishness of 'desire' can be transcended in thought, Sartre holds that the predicament of 'desire' is of a piece with the structure of consciousness--it is a predicament from which there is "no escape".

On Sartre's view, the predicament of 'desire' may be raised by the mere 'look' of the 'other'. The 'look' of the 'other' is described by Sartre as a piercing glance, a glance of such intensity as to raise the question of one's being. When the 'other' looks at me, Sartre says, "I am no longer master of the situation".[2] The 'other's' 'look', Sartre suggests, amounts to a "decentralization of the world which undermines the centralization I am simultaneously

effecting".[3] On Sartre's view, the 'other's' 'look' constitutes an alien point of view--a point of view which constitutes a "takeover" of one's own viewpoint. The 'other', by looking at me, recognizes what I am in a way I cannot. So--in a sense crucial to Sartre--I am captive to the 'other'. But I am only a partial captive, for the 'other's' 'look' sees me only as an 'object', not as the 'subject' I am. In this sense the 'other's' 'look' takes in--or "captures"--what I am, though not what I am. The 'look' of the 'other' threatens me. It constitutes me as a being divided in his consciousness, a being who is free yet captive to an 'other'.

Given the existence of the 'other', this dialectic of 'looks' is inescapable; I cannot escape the 'other's' 'look', nor can he escape mine. All subjects are divided in their being and captive to one another. We are each existential 'master' and 'slave' to one another, for our exchange of glances implies an "appropriation" of each other's being. Merely by looking at each other, we have become locked in an existential combat, in which both of us, reciprocally, seek to capture the ground of our conscious being from the 'other'. As Sartre has it:

> Everything which holds for me in my relations with the Other holds for him as well. While I attempt to free myself from the hold of the Other, the Other is trying to free himself from mine; while I seek to enslave the Other, the Other seeks to enslave me...Conflict is the original meaning of being for others.3

Hence Sartrian subjects are ensnarled in a sort of existential combat. They are slaves to the being which is not for themselves, but for the 'other'. Sartrian subjects 'desire' not 'recognition' but 'being'--for, if they can somehow retrieve the 'being'

they lack, they will achieve their freedom. In trying to capture the 'being' it lacks, the Sartrian subject must somehow appropriate the 'other'--or make the 'other' its own. Hence the Sartrian subject, like the Hegelian subject, bids to find a version of itself in the 'other'. As Sartre puts it: "My project of recovering myself is fundamentally a project of absorbing the other".[4]

Hence for Sartre all 'desire' is desire to appropriate the 'other'. One with 'desire' attempts to reverse the burden of his ontological predicament by absorbing the being of the 'other'. If on Hegel's view subjects seek 'recognition' by projecting this value onto an 'other', on Sartre's view subjects seek 'freedom' by introjecting, or "absorbing", an 'other' who bears this value. If on Hegel's view subjects seek another version of themselves through their 'desire', on Sartre's view subjects seek a version of themselves which is complete, in the sense of combining their conscious being for another with their conscious being for themselves. The goal of completeness is, however, a goal that cannot be realized, for it is Sartre's view that the 'other' both is, and remains free in his being; that is, that the 'other' is in principle a "freedom" who cannot be appropriated, absorbed, or introjected. Hence 'desire' must fail, because it is an attempt to "ensnare" something which cannot be snagged.

For Sartre the relation of 'desire' is not a relation between 'master' and 'slave', but a relation between 'mastery' and slavery', for both subjects are alternately both 'master' and 'slave'. The relation fluctuates, depending on who 'looks' at whom: it is a relation that is a continuous two-sided battle. The battle is a

continuing one because neither subject can achieve the 'desired' state of affairs, which is (to be) the foundation of his own being. Neither subject can "ensnare" the 'other'. The 'other', in Sartre's terms, remains a being who both "steals my being from me" and who, in his "freedom", founds the "being which is my being".[5]

For Sartre, 'sexual desire' is a type of "concrete relation", a relation between subject and 'other' that involves the predicament of conscious being--or, what comes to the same, the predicament of being conscious. Nonetheless, Sartre recognizes the physiological aspect of 'sexual desire', for on his view 'sexual desire' is paradigmatically experienced in a state of bodily arousal. For Sartre this aspect of 'sexual desire' is important, for it opens possibilities left unopened by other sorts of 'desire'; namely, the possibility of "incarnation" and the added possibility of what is called "double reciprocal incarnation".

Sartre thinks that 'sexual desire', of all 'desires', is uniquely "troubling". 'Sexual desire' can be "incarnated" or embodied by subjects in such a way that subject and 'sexual desire' become phenomenologically indistinguishable. Sartre thinks that in states of arousal subjects translate consciousness into body; by this process they "incarnate themselves". As Sartre puts it, "the being which (sexually) desires is consciousness making itself body".[6] For Sartre, the moment of arousal--in which consciousness and body become intertwined--is a moment that is characteristically "troubling", irresistable, and undeniable. In such moments, one is "invaded by facticity",[7] but at the same time becomes one's body in a way not ordinarily available.

For Sartre the state of aroused 'sexual desire' involves a momentary departure from the predicament of subjective being. If under ordinary conditions Sartrian subjects try to "ensnare" each other's being, in the moment of arousal they are "swallowed up", "doubly" and "reciprocally", in their own bodies. They do not thereby 'lose themselves' in their arousal, for it is Sartre's view that the moment of arousal is one of "revelation", not loss. Each is "revealed as flesh" before the 'other'. Neither is simply "flesh" or "opaque in his flesh" before the 'other', for both are "revealed" in their subjectivity before the 'other'.

Thus the moment of arousal is a moment of transcendental bearing. For one moment subjects no longer experience the loss of being involved in all concrete relations, for they transcend this predicament in a shared moment of "incarnate being". Sartre describes the moment of arousal as a moment of shared revelation:

> The meaning of my incarnation...is a magical language. I make myself flesh exactly because this desire will be nothing else in the 'other' but an incarnation similar to mine. Thus desire is an invitation to desire."8

Hence Sartre thinks that arousal, as well as the "caress" that expresses arousal, are states in which it is possible for subjects to share in their subjective being. But whether this moment of shared arousal--which Sartre likens to a moment of "communion"--is actually an expression of their 'desires' seems open to question. For example, in describing the moment of "communion" Sartre allows that subjects, though in some way transfixed in their being, nonetheless act so as to express their 'desires' in ways which preclude "communion". Sartre's analysis of "communion" thereby veers from the mode of being

to the mode of doing. In conveying the idea that "communion" is a "magical" state of being, Sartre claims "I incarnate myself in order to realize the incarnation of the 'other'". But Sartre follows that description with one which supplies greater detail as to the activity in question: "(I incarnate myself in order to)...make her enjoy her flesh, in order to compel her to feel herself flesh".[9] In the latter passage, the moment of "communion" is addressed as an activity, not as a state of being. The moment of "magic" is over, superceded by what seems like a moment in which one subject tries to seduce the 'other'. At <u>that</u> moment the "incarnation" of the subjects may be "double" but it is no longer "reciprocal". At <u>that</u> moment, the seducer's 'desire' is less of an "invitation" than a provocation.

Though Sartre allows that the state of arousal may suspend the intersubjective travail of subjects, he also allows that aroused subjects act so as to express their 'desire' in ways that provoke each 'other's' arousal. Sartre's treatment of 'sexual desire' is paradoxical, for though he allows that subjects may realize <u>themselves</u> in "communion", he also suggests that subjects cannot realize their 'desire' without acting in ways that negate the value of "communion". Once Sartre's subjects are no longer transfixed in arousal, and instead actively express their desires, the spell is broken. Insofar as 'desire' entails the "attempt at incarnation" and not simply the "magic" of that state of being, 'sexual desire', like all other 'desire', is itself "doomed to failure".[10]

It is Sartre's view, then, that when subjects "attempt" their "incarnation", the delicate balance achieved in "communion" breaks down. When this "rupture" occurs, either of two things happen: one

either concentrates on the pleasure of one's own "incarnation" or instead concentrates on the fact of the 'other's' "incarnation". Sartre thinks that both these foci constitute movements away from reciprocity; both involve a "lapse" from "communion". The first "lapse" is a movement in the direction of masochism; the second is a movement in the direction of sadism. According to Sartre, in the first movement a subject loses his own "incarnate consciousness", and instead treats himself as "mere flesh". By the same movement the subject has lost the perspective of the 'other' as "incarnate consciousness", since the 'other' is now mere "consciousness", not "incarnate consciousness". As Sartre puts it, what one wants of the 'other' is "that he should be the look which aids me in realizing my flesh".[11] One wants, in other words, to turn the 'other' into the active instrument of one's pleasure.

The second sort of movement from "communion" which Sartre recognizes is a movement in the direction of sadism. In this movement, it is the subject who moves toward "consciousness" and who thereby regards the 'other' as "mere flesh". Here the 'sexual desire' of subjects is characterized, not by "reflective attention" to their own pleasure, but by single-minded attention to the arousal of the 'other'. At this reach, Sartre suggests, "I seek to take the 'other's' body.."[12] One wants to be "incarnated", but not in a way that might "reveal" the 'other'. What one wants, instead, is to manipulate the 'other' to a point where he is "mere flesh", nothing more than flesh.

In other words, as soon as 'sexual desire' is experienced in an active mode, either as an attempt at "incarnation" or else as

something that affords the possibility of gaining pleasure, the spell of reciprocity is broken. For Sartre, the pleasure of 'sexual desire' is what ruins the "communal" aspect of the experience. Once the pleasure of aroused 'sexual desire' becomes apparent, subjects will either concentrate on their own pleasure or else concentrate upon forcing pleasure upon the 'other'. Sartre recognizes no middle ground. If one concentrates on one's own pleasure, one elevates oneself as a sex object and treats the 'other' as the "look" that enhances one's objectification. If one forces pleasure upon the 'other', one is attempting to trap the 'other's' "consciousness" within his body, in such a way as to objectify him. In either case, 'sexual desire' emerges as a 'desire' to appropriate the 'other'. In masochism, the 'other' is appropriated as an active instrument, or "look"; in sadism the 'other' is appropriated as a passive body, or "flesh". Thus, despite the possibility of "communion", 'sexual desire' is for Sartre a 'desire' like other 'desires'. Hence Sartre's view is that, despite their "communal" onset, all relations of 'sexual desire' emerge as master-slave relations or, in what comes to the same, relations of sado-masochism. For Sartre, "normal sexuality perpetually oscillates between the twin poles of sadism and masochism".[13] In its active expression, all sexual desire is necessarily sado-masochistic.

Let us examine Sartre's view of the sadistic relation, which constitutes one pole of sexual 'desire'. The sadist on Sartre's view is one who attempts to deprive his partner of "grace". The sadist concentrates on making his partner into mere "flesh", into "flesh" deprived of subjective being. Moreover, the sadist does not hesitate

to use force to achieve his aims. Thus Sartre: "The sadist aims therefore at making the flesh appear abruptly and by compulsion; that is, by the aid not of his own flesh but of his body as instrument".[14] The sadist, in other words, attempts to ensnare the being of the 'other' by rendering the 'other' a mere piece of "flesh". In doing so the sadist tries to reverse what Sartre sees as the predicament of conscious being, a predicament in which he is helplessly, and inescapably, the object of the 'other'.

Despite the manipulations of the sadist, which may include the techniques of torture, his efforts to ensnare the being of the 'other' must fail, since the "freedom" of the 'other' remains "out of reach".[15] On Sartre's view, even if the sadist "succeeds" in torturing his victim, his success is incomplete, for the victim will have the final 'look'--a 'look' which signals both the "freedom" of the victim and the futility of the sadist's efforts. The moment at which the sadist's victim "gives in" is for Sartre exactly the moment at which the futility of sadism becomes apparent. The sadist had attempted to ensnare the being of the 'other'; now, in getting the 'other' to submit, he is forced to acknowledge the 'other' as a "freedom".

For Sartre the masochistic relation is the inverse of the sadistic relation. If the sadist attempts to make the 'other' into "mere flesh", the masochist attempts to make himself into "mere flesh" before the 'other'. In different ways both sadist and masochist try to escape the predicament of subjective, conscious bieng. The sadist tries to do so by making the 'other' into mere "flesh", thereby denying the conscious being of the 'other'. The masochist

tries to do so by making himself into mere "flesh", thereby denying his own conscious being. As Sartre puts it, the masochist's attitude is that of "causing myself to be absorbed by the Other and losing myself in his subjectivity in order to get rid of my own".[16]

The efforts of the sadist and the masochist come to much the same. Both the sadist and the masochist try to escape their predicament, the sadist by actively "absorbing" the 'other's' being, the masochist by passively "being absorbed" in the 'other's' being. Both try to resolve their own predicament by merging, and in that sense by identifying their being with the being of the 'other'. But this proves to be a misguided attempt, since each is a being that cannot be "absorbed"; each is a "freedom", something "out of reach" in principle. Hence masochistic 'desire', like sadistic 'desire', leads to failure, for the masochist cannot deny his own being, just as the sadist cannot deny the being of the 'other'. One can no more appropriate the "freedom" of the 'other' than repudiate one's own. Masochistic 'desire', like sadistic 'desire', is a 'desire' for a transcendental unity that is impossible to achieve.

With greater consistency than Hegel, Sartre holds that 'love' is an outgrowth of 'desire'. Thus it is Sartre's view that the 'love' relation contains elements of both sadism and masochism. Sartre suggests the resemblance of 'love' and masochism by claiming that the 'lover', like the 'masochist', wants to become an object in the eyes of his beloved. Unlike the 'masochist, the 'lover' does not try to make himself into mere "flesh", but tries to become the exclusive "object-limit" of his beloved. The 'lover's' claim of exclusivity introduces a sadistic element into the 'love' relation. For what

the 'lover' wants is not merely to become a "whole world" to the beloved, but to render the beloved a part of that "whole world". The 'lover's' demand is overweaning indeed, for what the 'lover' wants is to become the exclusive subject, as well as the exclusive object of the beloved.

Hence 'love' falls prey to the same "logic" of failure that dooms 'desire'. To bid for 'love' is to attempt to ensnare a freedom: it is to attempt to attain the "willing captivity" of the beloved. On Sartre's view, no 'love' relation can be successful, for to the extent 'love' succeeds, it fails. For Sartre, the 'lover's' ploy is that he projects himself as the "whole world" of the beloved. If he succeeds--if the beloved finds him irresistible--he will fail, for the beloved will want to be found irresistible and to be 'loved' in turn. As Sartre puts it: "Each one wants the other to love him but does not take into account the fact that to love is to want to be loved and that thus by wanting the other to love him, he only wants the other to want to be loved in turn".[17] In other words, the 'love' relation fails because it is a relation that suffers the inflationary growth of the 'lover's' demand that he be loved in an exclusive way. The 'lover's' 'desire' is--like sadistic and masochistic 'desire'--'desire' that is in principle uncompromising. Hence Sartre likens the 'love' relation to an "ideal out of reach"; it is a "reference to infinity".[18]

For Sartre, 'love', like 'desire', is something of a metaphysical pretense. 'Lovers', like those who 'desire', attempt the impossible: they attempt to escape their 'predicament' by claiming--or appropriating--the being of the 'other'. Sartre refers to 'desire' as "lack

of being", but the "being" referred to is the "being" of the 'other', which is "out of reach". Hence 'desire' is for Sartre a demand that is overweaning, asking more of ontology than ontology can provide.

For Sartre, all 'desire'--whether it is momentarily realized, then lost in the state of "incarnation", whether it is pursued actively through sadism, or passively through masochism, or idealistically, through 'love'--is a demand for the conscious being that is lost to the 'other'. Ultimately, then, what one with 'desire' seeks is a sort of subjective completeness, a kind of self-realization that is not warranted by ontology. Subjective completeness may be an implausible, romantic goal; it may be a goal which is impossible for subjects to reflectively experience, a goal that is impossible for subjects to derive pleasure from, but it is nonetheless--on Sartre's view--the irrepressible goal of 'desire'. All 'desire' seeks to realize an unrealizable state of affairs, in which subject and 'other' are one. All 'desire', 'sexual' or not, is the desire of a romantic plaintiff who brings a losing suit against ontology, claiming that the barrier between subjects must be dismantled.

Section D: Conclusion

Both Hegel and Sartre assume that 'desire' is real insofar as it is conscious, and both assume that the conscious reality in which 'desire' maneuvers is an antagonistic reality. For Hegel, the reality of 'desire' is anonymous: subjects try to relieve themselves of this reality by seeking 'recognition' through 'desire'. For Sartre, the reality of 'desire' is a vulnerable reality: subjects are objectified by each other, and thereby threatened in their conscious being. Though Sartre holds that it is possible for subjects to escape reality through the "magic" of "incarnation", it is his further view that the moment of "incarnation" is necessarily followed by the movement of subjects to either satisfy or draw pleasure from their "incarnation"; such movements constitute a return to the reality of their conscious predicament, which is antagonistic.

On both views what emerges is a picture of reality in which the role of 'desire' is impersonal. 'Desire' is a passion of the mind ignited by the fact of the 'other', not by the person of the 'other'. 'Desire' is a uniform demand of consciousness against any and all 'others'. Construed this way, 'desire' is passionate, without being at all sexual; 'desire' is singleminded, without being at all tempered by feeling. This is a paradoxical position to take about the experience of sexual 'desire', which is an experience that most would think of as intensely personal.

What is more, the idea that 'desire' is an antagonistic demand is an idea that has the disadvantage of obscuring the distinction between human aggressivity and human sexuality. This is a distinction that is no doubt difficult to draw. On Goldman's criterion, e.g., sexual desire is thought of as the 'desire for bodily contact and the

pleasure it affords'. Yet if we employ that criterion, we may find it difficult to distinguish the desire of a football player from the desire of a sexual athlete. Nonetheless, Shaffer's question--'what makes sexual desire sexual?'--is a question that deserves an answer. The phenomenologist is not in a position to supply it.

By holding that 'desire' is a univocal demand of consciousness, Hegel and Sartre close off the possibility that sexual desire may convey multiple aims, as well as the possibility that sexual desire is plastic as to intention. To the extent Solomon is right, and sexual desire does express a variety of "messages", the phenomenologist cannot accomodate his insight, since it is his view that sexual 'desire' conveys only one "message", which is that of self-completion.

Though it is difficult to empiricize the phenomenological claim, it seems the case that persons often do not aspire to self-completion in their sexual desires. Persons often experience conflicts over their sexual desires; they may be uncommitted to their desires, and even surprised by them. Sex is seen by many as a degrading, guilt-ridden sort of activity, and this valuation is reflected in the often ambivalent way they experience their sexual desire. Though sometimes persons may be loathe to express their sexual desires, sometimes they express their loathing through their desires; where that is the case, it might seem that the goal of their desire has less to do with self-completion than with self-destruction.

Hegel and Sartre suggest that subjects try to "complete" or "realize" themselves through their 'desire'. For Hegel subjects are inchoate, and for Sartre subjects are divided, by the fact of the 'other'. For Hegel subjects are weighed down by the burden of

their invisibility, and for Sartre they are weighed down by the burden of their freedom. The phenomenological subject's 'desire' is a desire to either tame or absorb the 'other', and thereby to "realize" or "complete" itself.

The idea that 'desire' is desire for self-realization is a common intuition concerning 'desire'. In Plato's Symposium, for example, Aristophanes suggests that the goal of sexual desire is determined by the mythic "whole" an individual belongs to. The 'desire' of each, in other words, is a desire to reach the "complete" state of being--either male, female, or hermaphroditic--that each individual once was. For Aristophanes, 'desire' is a desire for completeness: each finds within himself the mate who properly belongs to him. In effect, there seems little difference between a 'desire' for one's original "completeness" as construed by Aristophanes, and the 'desire' to project one's transcendent "completeness" as this is construed by Hegel and Sartre.

The good sense of the phenomenological model is its insight into the overweaning nature of 'desire'--into the fact that persons often experience their sexual desires in uncompromising ways. Given the fact that persons often experience their sexual desires in a demanding way, it may be rare that, in a given moment, persons engaged in sexual relations will need each other equally, or seek approval to the same degree. This makes it seem that the "logic" of the situation entails that one subject be 'master', sexual dominator or dominatrix. But this "logic" may be misleading. To assume it is binding in all cases is to assume that the sexual desires of persons are completely subjective, rather than subjective in some compromised way. It is

to assume that persons with sexual desire cannot escape their subjective boundaries through their desires. It is to assume that their sexual desire always is for their own image in another, and never for the 'other' as a person in his or her own right.

Hegel and Sartre emphasize the harsh, uncompromising aspect of sexuality, much as Nagel and Ruddick emphasize its beneficent and mutual aspect. Neither paradigm seems entirely convincing. The "complete" subjectivity invoked by Sartre seems just as implausible as the "complete" mutual relation invoked by Nagel and Ruddick. For Nagel and Ruddick, paradigm sexual desire involves a project of mutual self-discovery; for Hegel and Sartre, paradigm sexual desire constitutes an assault on others. Neither paradigm seems sufficient for sexual desire, since the feelings and intentions associated with sexual desire need not display either a coherent "logic" of mutuality or a coherent "logic" of subjectivity. Hence it seems best to assume that sexual desire is a phenomenon which need not resemble either a polite conversation between two adults or a struggle between two subjects.

HEGEL FOOTNOTES

[1] Phenomenology of Spirit, trans. Miller Findlay, Oxford, 1977. Cf. also Baillie trans. Harper and Row.

[2] Kojeve, Introduction to the Lectures on Hegel, Basic Books, pp. 5-7.

[3] Ibid., p. 6.

[4] Cf. e.g., Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense, International Universities Press, 1966.

[5] Kojeve, p. 7.

[6] Ibid., p. 7.

[7] Ibid., p. 13.

[8] Ibid., p. 22.

[9] Baillie, p. 238.

[10] Kelly, "Notes on Lordship and Bondage", Hegel, Doubleday Anchor, p. 213.

[11] Philosophy of Nature, Part 3, Section 369. Quoted by Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, Trans. Parshley, Bantam edit., p. 4.

[12] Hegel, Early Theological Writings, trans. Knox, Oxford.

SARTRE FOOTNOTES

[1]Robert Cumming, Philosophy of Jean Paul Sartre, Vintage, p. 25.

[2]Ibid., p. 203.

[3]Ibid., p. 209.

[4]Ibid., p. 210.

[5]Arthur Danto, Sartre, Viking Press, p. 125.

[6]Being and Nothingness, Hazel Barnes, trans. Washington Square Pr. p. 506.

[7]Ibid., p. 504.

[8]Ibid., p. 514.

[9]Ibid., p. 508.

[10]Ibid., p. 512.

[11]Ibid., p. 524

[12]Ibid., p. 524.

[13]Ibid., p. 524.

[14]Cumming, p. 229.

[15]Barnes, p. 461.

[16]Ibid, p. 461.

[17]Ibid., p. 471.

[18]Ibid, p. 461.

CHAPTER FOUR

We had fed the heart on fantasies,

The heart's grown brutal from the fare;

More substance in our enmities

Than in our love

W. B. Yeats
"Meditations in Time of Civil War", 1923

Section A: Introduction

In Chapter Four, we examine a number of psychoanalytic views as to the emotional content of sexual desire. The discipline of psychoanalysis, which Freud pioneered, is relevant here because psychoanalysis has both widened and complicated the perception of sexual desire. In part, psychoanalysis is a technique for investigating those bodily impulses and mental intentions which persons either find difficult or impossible to acknowledge, or even to remember. Psychoanalysis may lay claim to the insight that sexual desire originates in a variety of infantile, pleasure-seeking, bisexual impulses as well as to the insight that sexual intentions are often hidden from consciousness, or "unconscious". Though there are numerous schools of psychoanalytic thought, all schools assume that "infantile sexuality" and the "unconscious" are important determinants of human sexuality. Almost as one, psychoanalysts contend that sexual motivation is both more complex and less transparent a topic than is commonly supposed. Hence it is at some peril, but without undue risk, that one can speak of a single psychoanalytic model of sexual desire.

Moreover, psychoanalysis is a mode of inquiry that is concerned with the emotional conditions of sexual desire--i.e., with such concerns as the conditions of sexual excitement, and the conditions under which persons are able to make a commitment to their desires so as to be able to "connect" not just physically, but emotionally with another. From the standpoint of psychoanalysis, this emphasis on subjective feelings is crucial. Psychoanalysis is--or pretends to be--a science of emotions. If the analytic philosophers we have

examined are principally concerned with the question, 'what is sexual desire?', and if the moralists we have examined are principally concerned with the question, 'what is the value of sexual desire?', then psychoanalysis is the mode of thought which focuses most closely on the question, 'what is the emotional content of sexual desire?'

The first view examined--that of Robert Stoller--suggests that the most sexually exciting sexual desires have less to do with the pursuit of sexual intimacy with another person than with the expression of hostility. The second view examined is that of Otto Kernberg, whose work suggests that there is a relatively large class of cases in which persons remain uncommitted to their sexual desires, or experience their desires without passion. The third view examined is that of Sigmund Freud, who, in the essays on the "Psychology of Love", claims that feelings of "sensuality" and "affection" tend to be incompatible. Freud claims that it is relatively common for persons to deplore those for whom they feel the greatest desire--in the sense of sensual attraction. In common parlance, Freud claims that the experience of sexual desire invokes an emotional double standard, in that there is great, typical difficulty in combining feelings of sensual attraction with feelings of affection and openness. This is a view which challenges the idea, put forth by Nagel and Ruddick, that sexual desire is an authentic, "complete" form of self-expression.

What all these views have in common is that they raise questions about the extent to which sexual relations are equal psychological relations. In addition they challenge the plausibility of the idea of a "complete" expression of sexual desire, as well as of

the idea that sexual desire is an authentic passion, a distinctive personal statement. They suggest that sexual desire acquires its emotional meaning, or meanings, through childhood experiences, and that these meanings often betray the qualities of openness and expressiveness with which sexual desire is often imbued, and sometimes celebrated, in adult life.

Section B: Hostility and Sexual Desire

Though many commentators agree[1] that mutual responsiveness, attentiveness, and openness are requirements for sexual relations that are "adult" and "complete", it is far from clear that the feelings most often associated with sexual desire tend to meet this expectation. From the standpoint of sexual desire, adults may--and often do--behave much as children. The feelings and intentions associated with sexual desire may be nasty as well as caring, malevolent as well as benevolent, impersonal as well as personal, shallow as well as deep.

The fact that sexual desire is equivocal, sometimes imbued with feelings of intimacy and openness to another and sometimes not, leads Janice Moulton to suggest that there are, in fact, distinct types of sexual relations--those that are "satisfaction" oriented and intimate, and those that are "anticipation" oriented, and "novel". But on her view the intimacy of sexual relations has to do with whether the sexual partners are familiar or well-known to each other or not. This is not an adequate method for gauging the quality of sexual relations, since the feelings and intentions associated with sexual desire may have little or nothing to do with the famili-

arity of the sexual partners. It often seems the case that people are able to share their sexual secrets with complete strangers, while recoiling from this kind of openness, or intimacy, with a sexual partner of long standing.

There are a number of contemporary phenomena that suggest that the most perspicuous thing about sexual desire is not the affection it may convey, but rather the hostility it expresses. One is sexual slang. Many of the slang terms used for 'sexual intercourse' imply conquest and coercion: "fucking" and "screwing" are examples. On the basis of slang, one might suppose that sex is a way of beating someone up, or humiliating them, and that sexual desire is wanting to do so. It might be thought that sexual slang is merely an aggressive form of usage, not a hostile form. But this contention is belied by the slang of sex objects. Women are referred to as "pieces of ass" or "cunts"; men are referred to as "pricks". These designations seem more than mere aggression, and more than a salute to the difference of genitalia. To refer to a person as a body part is to dehumanize that person. It is to reduce a person to a single genital object, and thereby to ignore their other qualities, their tastes, their idiosyncracies; it is to ignore their subjectivity.

Another phenomenon which suggests the hostile character of sexual desire is that of contemporary pornography, a form in which sexual acts and acts of graphic violence are often intermingled. Perhaps most importantly, pornography is not an isolated phenomenon, catering only to a select audience, since there are elements of pornographic material in most mass advertising. Much of this pornographic material is sado-masochistic, stressing motifs of sexual

triumph and sexual revenge. Since pornography is--in a way--sexual fantasy that has been packaged and marketed, it is a good guess that such motifs approximate those found in the ordinary sexual fantasies of the men and women who constitute the advertiser's audience. Pornography, like sexual fantasy, is concerned with provoking sexual arousal, sexual interest, and sexual excitement. Perhaps then, there is a connection between hostility and sexual excitement.

Robert Stoller has recently argued that this is the case, and that hostility--whether acknowledged or not--is the very essence of sexual excitement. Stoller thinks that, since youthful sexual impulses cannot actually be gratified, they are channeled into a fantasy of "triumph" which remains active in adult sexual excitement. According to Stoller, the childhood difficulty of establishing or "proving" one's gender (i.e., one's masculinity or feminity) is such that attempts to resolve the difficulty are never completely successful. Neither boys nor girls can completely acquit themselves of the bisexual impulses they experience in relation to their parents. Boys are victimized by their femininity; girls are victimized by their masculinity. Caught in this vexing predicament children fantasize their mastery; they are no longer "a victim but the erotically successful victor".[2] They fantasize a "triumph" over the gender they have forsaken. According to Stoller, this fantasy remains active throughout adult sexual experience. The fantasy of "triumph" is never repudiated, and tends to be especially active during sexual excitement.

Stoller believes this to be the case since he thinks adult sexual excitement involves--to a greater or lesser extent--"fetish-

izing" one's sexual object. Stoller defines "fetishizing" as directing one's sexual desires toward a fantasy object. This fantasy object, suggests Stoller, may be inanimate. It may be a part of the human body; it may even be a category, typically a gender category, such as 'men' or 'women'. If it is to be a successful fantasy object, it must reduce the anxiety associated with the threatening issue of gender, while at the same time providing this issue with a semblance of satisfaction. To be successful, a "fetish" or fantasy object must be "real" or human enough to provide apparent satisfaction, yet "unreal" or inhuman enough to minimize the anxiety and guilt that is associated with expressing hostility toward the parent who is originally its target. The fetish, then, is a fantasy object that is sexually exciting, yet not too threatening.

On Stoller's analysis, the 'fetish' is much like Hegel's 'slave' and Sartre's 'other'. The fetish is first of all not an actual object, but rather the image of one's desire. It <u>is</u> one's sexual desire, projected in fantasy. Like Hegel's 'slave', the fetish cannot in fact satisfy the desire it is invented to satisfy. Like Sartre's 'other', the fetish invokes a threat. Further, the fetishist--like Hegel's 'master' or Sartre's frustrated 'subject'--can do no better than achieve the illusion of satisfying his desire. Since the intimacy of the fetishist and his creation is fantasied, it is an intimacy no less spurious, and no less inauthentic than the intimacy of 'master' and 'slave'. The main difference is that the inauthenticity of the fetishist is internal, or intra-psychic, rather than external, or social, as is the case with the Hegelian 'master' and 'slave'.

For Stoller, a fetishized object--like Sartre's 'other'--is never seen as being fully human. Fetishized sexual desire is sexual desire that is typically directed toward any "stud" or "piece of ass", rather than toward another person. The full range of human qualities is carefully edited by the fetishist, who focuses only on those qualities conducive to his sexual excitement. A classical example of a fetish is the male transvestite's use of women's clothing as a sexual object. According to Stoller, the clothing allows the transvestite an exciting way of experiencing his femininity without threatening his identity as a male. Since the clothes may be put on and taken off at will, the transvestite is able to manipulate his fantasy in such a way as to triumph over the "threat" of his femininity.

According to Stoller, all sexual fantasies share a certain mechanics with the fantasies of the transvestite. Each sexual fantasy follows a carefully "edited" story line. The story must not be too truthful--for that would make it threatening--nor too heavily embellished--for that would make the story sexually dull. A hint of the original childhood "threat" must remain intact but it must be balanced, in the fantasy, by a sense of "triumph". According to Stoller, the material of sexual fantasy involves an attempt to rework developmental problems; sexual fantasy entails repeated attempts to "undo childhood traumas or frustrations that threatened the development of one's masculinity or femininity".[3]

Like Sartre, Stoller finds sexual desire to be a hostile response to an imagined "threat". Also like Sartre, Stoller finds that the project of sexual desire is never "completed", because the "threat"

it addresses, and embellishes upon, is never completely surmounted: though persons may "resolve" their bisexual impulses, these impulses do not disappear. But if on Sartre's view the "threat" which sexual desire responds to is ontological, on Stoller's view this "threat"--or the perception of it--is contingent upon the conditions of childhood development. The crucial point, for Stoller, is that, under ordinary conditions of development, all boys must "give up" some of the femininity which they unconsciously fear, and all girls must "give up" some of the masculinity which they unconsciously envy. According to Stoller, this adjustment is never finally resolved, and the lingering effects of the adjustment remain active in unconscious psychic life, where they dispose persons to entertain a sort of psychic revenge against the opposite sex in their sexual fantasies, though not necessarily in their sexual activity. For Stoller, then, hostility is a contingent feature of sexual desire--and not a necessary feature, as Sartre suggests.

It might be thought, if resentment of the opposite gender is a contingent feature of mental life, that it is a feature amenable to change, or to social reform. For example, if the contours of the typical family were changed, so that parenting were made more equal, that change would be likely to have an effect upon the child's perception of its parents--who dramatize, in the first instance, the idea of different genders. Equal parenting might have the effect of de-emphasizing the importance of gender in the mental life of children. If fathers were less "macho" in their masculinity, and mothers were less nurturing in their femininity, that might have the effect of reducing the psychic importance that so often attends a child's gender

assignment. If the perceived difference in parental gender were less marked, that might reduce the level of conflict experienced by the child in establishing its own gender identity.

But even this altered conception of family relations might not redress the meanings that are assigned to 'masculinity' and 'femininity' in a patriarchal society. As things now stand, women are denied social authority equal to that of men, and, in accordance with this brute fact, 'femininity' tends to be devalued and 'masculinity' to be overvalued. In patriarchal culture, those who inherit a 'masculine' position--whether they are in fact males or females--inspire envy, whereas those who inherit a 'feminine' position inspire fear. Since both envy and fear are states which tend to be closely associated with hostility, it is quite possible that a reform of family structure per se would not alter the psychological association between gender and hostility, which Stoller perceives as the crucial theme of adult sexual arousal.

As against views like those of Nagel and Ruddick--who opt for "complete", morally valuable sex--Stoller suggests that sex is morally suspect to the degree it is truly exciting. On Stoller's account, sexual partners are not model citizens, but more like victims of development who fantasize sexual revenge. They are victims who, denied the full expression of the sensual potential, fantasize a "triumph" over the gender they have repudiated. Having such fantasies, Stoller points out, need not deter feeling involved with others or feeling affection for them. Elements of sado-masochistic fantasy may even, he suggests, add spice to sexual relationships. It seems clear, however, that the sado-masochistic element of sexual fantasy

weighs against the emergence of an attitude of mutual respect that Nagel and Ruddick take to be characteristic of "complete" sexual relations. If Stoller is right, the sort of sex that is "best" from a moral point of view is not the sort of sex that is "best" from the standpoint of sexual desire.

Section C: Narcissistic Sexual Desire

A different but no less troubling view of sexual desire is suggested by the psychoanalytic work of Otto Kernberg.[1] Kernberg's researches into "narcissistic character disorders" provide evidence of a class of cases in which sexual desire is felt, not as a desire which arises within the world at large--and which thereby involves other persons--but as a desire which arises wholly within the orbit of self concern. The narcissist, suggests Kernberg, views his sexual objects as either "pushovers" or "threats"--not as persons.[2] The sex life of the narcissist is governed by an exaggerated, ambivalent outlook--an outlook which serves the narcissist's strategy of remaining emotionally independent from the sex partners he or she chooses. In other words, the sexual desire of the narcissist is characterized by a degree of self absorption that precludes the possibility of making an emotional commitment to another person.

For Kernberg, sexual narcissism originates in the child's experience of "separating", or distinguishing itself, from its parents. From the child's viewpoint, "separation" is a threatening task, since it involves a departure from the nurturant comfort to which the child has grown accustomed. The difficulty of "separation" is such that children tend to retain the image of their parent(s) as a way of

defending against the feelings of helplessness, disappointment, and rage that are raised by their perceived departure. Under the aegis of this defense, children relate to their parents, not as separate beings or "external objects" but rather as internal images, images with which they identify themselves.

According to Kernberg, the process of narcissistic identification serves two defensive purposes: the child is able to deny the painful fact of "separation" as well as the feelings of rage which may be raised by the child's sense that it has been abandoned. Where the latter motive is prominent, the child may pursue a strategy of "splitting" its parent(s) into two images, one of which is perceived as gratifying and "good", the other of which is perceived as frustrating and "bad". The child idealizes the "good" image, while repressing the "bad" one in an effort to cloak its rage. By following this strategy, the child is, in effect, relating to its parent(s) not as complete persons but as split-up images, images that are unconsciously deemed to be incompatible. Because the child lacks an integrated concept of its parent(s), its emotional connection to them remains imaginary. This strategy--if it remains in force--closes off the possibility that the child may become realistically attracted to its parents as separate persons, in a way that might provide a model for later interpersonal commitment.

Kernberg suggests that there is a relatively large class of cases in which this sort of narcissistic strategy remains intact throughout life. Adults who "inherit" this strategy remain concerned with identifying and with resembling their sexual objects, for they perceive their sexual objects as fragmented images of themselves.

The sexual objects of the narcissist are perceived as "pushovers" or "threats"-derivatives of the "good" image, with which it is safe to identify, or of the "bad" image, with which it is not. The narcissist tends to choose sexual partners who typify the least threatening, most innocuous aspects of himself/herself. Since the narcissist's choice of sex object acquires its meaning only within an orbit of self concern, the "logic" of narcissistic sexual desire is circular. By sexually desiring another, the narcissist projects his or her own image onto "an external object that is loved because it stands for the self".[3] Like the image of Narcissus in a pool of water, the love object or sexual partner of the narcissist is perceived as nothing more than a reflection.

Ideally, as Kernberg suggests, the element of narcissistic identification in sexual desire is balanced by the element of object choice--i.e., by the desire to have one's sexual object, rather than to be like it. Ideally, adult sexual relations are marked by a mixture of self concern and feelings of attachment to one's sexual object, based on some combination of narcissistic desire and "attachment type" desire. Less ideally, the narcissistic strategy remains intact, manifest in feelings of "deep distrust and depreciation of others",[4] feelings which may prove an insurmountable barrier to "falling and remaining in love".[5] If Kernberg is right, there is a class of cases in which passionate, and even romantic identification with another is less an indication of feelings of love than a strategy built upon underlying feelings of distrust and hostility. In that event, sexual desire is sometimes a desire that is so intensely ambivalent that it cannot be shared with another person. If that is true, there

is a class of cases in which the "paradigm" suggested by Nagel and Ruddick must remain an ideal out of reach.

Section D: The Double Standard of Sexual Desire

Kernberg's work on narcissism suggests that children, in their earliest "love affair", may follow an emotional strategy that precludes the possibility of later "attachment type" behavior, and which thereby precludes the possibility of having sexual experiences characterized by interpersonal involvement. Freud, in his essays on the "Psychology of Love", addressed himself to a different barrier to romance--that of combining sensual and affectionate feelings within the same relationship, or in relation to the same object. Freud's judgment as to the likelihood of affectionate sex or sexual affection was pessimistic in the extreme; "civilization" on his view does not provide the basis for a satisfactory compromise between the "sensual current" and the "affectionate current". On Freud's view most sexual relationships are either sensual and not affectionate, or else affectionate and not sensual. That is the sense that must be given to Freud's claim: "Where they love they do not desire and where they desire they do not love".[1]

On Freud's perspective, the problem of combining "desire" and "love" is aggravated during the course of childhood development. Ordinarily, each child is required to comply with the incest taboo. To meet this requirement, each child must quell the sensual impulses felt toward its parents, while at the same time preserving the affection felt toward them. Hence complying with the taboo requires the child the alienate its feelings, to separate its sensual and affection-

ate feelings by quelling the former and retaining the latter. On Freud's view, this "alienation of feelings" is often of lasting impact, and provides the basis for what has come to be called the "double standard" of sexual desire. According to the "double standard", persons tend to feel stronger sensual attraction for anonymous sexual partners, rather than for partners who they know and care for--i.e., for partners who they relate to in approximately the same way as they once related to their parents. Lasch, describing the impact of the "double standard" upon male sexual desire, has written: "After the painful renunciation of the Mother, sensuality seeks only those objects that evoke no reminder of her, while the Mother herself, together with other "pure" (socially respectable) women, is idealized beyond reach of the sensual".[2]

It may be the case that the "double standard" is more characteristic of male sexual desire than of female sexual desire. That is the claim made by Nancy Chodorow,[3] who argues that the psychic impact of the incest taboo is less overwhelming for girls, since their attraction to their father is typically neither as exclusive nor as intense as the boy's attraction to his mother. If the girl's sensual attraction is less intense--as goes the argument--it is less important that it be repressed, and thereby less likely that girls will have to split their sensual and affectionate feelings in two, and less likely that women will desire under the aegis of a "double standard". But Chodorow's claim seems to imply that this difference is more of a difference of degree than a difference of kind. If that is the case, Freud's idea that feelings of affection and sensuality are incompatible seems a contingent truth about human sexuality, a truth which

does not admit of gender difference.

Some evidence for this view is suggested by the fact that both men and women often choose strangers as objects of sexual fantasy, as well as by the fact that both men and women tend to develop their fantasies in such a way as to emphasize anonymous characteristics, rather than familiar characteristics, among their sexual objects. The fantasy of Isadora Wing, the heroine of Erica Jong's The Fear of Flying, is one that, like most sexual fantasies, resists gender typing:

> For the true, ultimate zipless A-1 fuck, it was necessary that you never get to know the man very much. I had noticed, for example, how all my infatuations dissolved as soon as I really became friends with a man... After that I would like him, perhaps even love him--but without passion. And it was passion that I wanted.4

Section E: Conclusion

This brief survey of psychoanalytic claims suggests three things concerning sexual desire. First, under ordinary or conventional conditions of development, barriers are raised to sensual expression, and these barriers often raise latent feelings of hostility and guilt toward sexual objects. Second, the difficulty children have in emotionally detaching themselves from their parents may, in some cases, limit their ability to conceive of their sexual object as an object, rather than as a reflection of their self concern. Third, the impact of the incest taboo is such that it contributes to an alienation of sexual feelings, which makes problematic the contribution of affectionate and sensual feelings.

What these claims suggest is that the "paradigm" of sexual

desire offered by the moralists we have examined rests upon shaky emotional ground. Under the "paradigm", sexual desire is modeled on expression, communication, and a kind of affectionate passion. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, these characteristics cannot be thought to be emotionally implicit in sexual desire, for each characteristic bears the stamp of childhood emotional conflicts. From the psychoanalytic viewpoint, adult sexual desire cannot be thought completely expressive, since it is based partly upon the repression or quelling of infantile sensual impulses. Similarly, adult sexual desire cannot be thought completely communicative, since all sexual desire is based partly upon auto-erotic impulses and feelings. At a narcissistic extreme, such feelings preclude the possibility of any sort of sincere sexual communication. Lastly, it cannot be assumed that adult sexual desire is a loving or affectionate passion, since the psychic impact of compliance with the incest taboo is such that feelings of sensuality tend to be separated from feelings of love and affection.

From a psychoanalytic viewpoint a "paradigm" of adult sexual desire is unilluminating, because it cannot resist the contribution made by infantile sexuality to sexual development; nor can it resist the rather covert, unconscious mode of operations through which adults tend to recreate aspects of their infantile sexuality in their sexual relationships. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, there is no single "paradigm" of adult sexual desire which is not, in one way or another, challenged by the emotional conflicts that are raised during childhood sexual development.

To the extent that such childhood conflicts remain unresolved, they remain crucial to adult sexual desire. The difficulty of es-

tablishing gender identity during childhood is an adult issue as well, for the anxiety that is raised by not having resolved this issue contributes to the climate of fear and envy that pervades gender relations in contemporary society. The child's difficulty in establishing emotional independence from its parents is an adult issue as well, since the ambivalence that attends not having resolved this issue diminishes the overall level of sexual attachment behavior in contemporary society--an issue which those who would defend the traditional nuclear family see as a major social problem. Finally, the child's difficulty of integrating sensuality and affection also raises an adult issue, since this alienation of sexual feelings seems to contribute to the increasing cultural emphasis upon sex for its own sake.

From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, it makes no sense to draw a rigid distinction between the childish and adult components of sexual desire, since adult sexual desire--whether it is judged "normal" or not--involves a fragile, precarious compromise of childish, infantile components. Strictly speaking there is no "normal" sexual desire which does not include "abnormal"--perverse, auto-erotic, and infantile components. Sexual desire that is genital, and heterosexual, and geared to reproductive ends is but a single form of sexual desire, a form that is mainly distinguished by the fact that it is the form championed by contemporary social conventions. Since there is no necessity for this being the case, sexual desire in its championed form cannot be thought either more "normal" or more "natural" than sexual desire in its other, less championed forms.

Psychoanalysis has often been interpreted as either a doctrine

of biological determinism or as a doctrine of environmental determinism. Strictly speaking, neither of these positions can be credited. Insofar as psychoanalysis is a doctrine, it is a doctrine which challenges any attempt to give a sufficient account of human sexuality on the basis of either natural or conventional considerations. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, sexual development is a precarious, "iffy" matter, not a matter that is determined by the playing out of some genetic code, and certainly not a matter that is determined by the brute fact of whether a given person is biologically male or female.

At the same time, sexual development is not seen as a conditioning process--as a process whereby the child acquires its sexual orientation and aims by learning from its parental "teachers". Though from a psychoanalytic viewpoint the period of infantile sexuality is important because it is a period of great impressionableness and helplessness, it is not assumed that infants are themselves especially malleable or susceptible to sexual conditioning. The infant is not conceived of as a psychic tabula rasa, but rather as an organism characterized by willful and insistent energies, energies which are partly sexual and partly aggressive. The crucial thing about sexual development is not that a child learns from its parents, or conditions itself to meet their expectations. Rather, it is that, in the first instance, the child's energies collide with the expectations and requirements of its parents, and that the impact of this collision leads children to transform their energies, while at the same time modifying and distorting and defending against the perceived influence of their parents.

Hence the psychoanalytic view is that the child is in some ways an energetic rebel, rather than a docile student. Accordingly, the transmission of parental attitudes to children is not a process essentially characterized by mimicry, nor is it a communication in which the signal that is received need resemble the signal that is sent. Given the rebellious posture of the child, parental attitudes often influence the development of sexual motivation in highly distorted ways. For that reason it remains somewhat unclear what effect a change in family structure would have upon infantile sexuality, and thereby upon adult sexual motivation.

Recently, feminists such as Dorothy Dinnerstein and Nancy Chodorow[1] have argued for a realignment of parental roles, in the direction of more equal mother and father parenting. The presumption is that this sort of structural change will have a radical effect upon the sexual development of children. While it does seem that this sort of family restructuring would serve to reduce the awe and fear of women that both boys and girls experience in relation to their mother--who is, under prevailing convention, the "primary" parent--it is questionable, or at least unclear, that family restructuring will serve to reduce the level of frustration that inheres in the child's early collision with sexual convention and adult reality. Though family restructuring might reduce the somewhat spiteful, sexist character of ordinary sexual development, it might not reduce the frustrating character of that development, which seems largely to result from the forbearance of sensual energy, of nurturant comfort, and of incestuous love that is required of all children.

Section F: Freud's Model of Sexual Motivation

Though the psychoanalytic model of sexual desire casts doubt upon the moralist's model of sexual desire, this should not be taken to indicate psychoanalytic support for the phenomenological position. Sartre's view of sexual desire is that 'sexual desire' is the straightforward attempt of consciousness to "appropriate" the sexual object. 'Sexual desire' as such is a claim or demand of consciousness, an attempt of consciousness to project itself completely, so as to realize itself.

This is a view of sexual motivation quite different from that suggested by psychoanalysis. On the psychoanalytic view, 'sexual desire' is characterized in terms of conflicting motivational components, not in terms of a single unifying aim. 'Sexual desire' is seen as a compromise between impulse and convention, not as an innate mental structure. On the psychoanalytic view, 'sexual desire' is in part an unconscious projection of one's childish impulses and conflicts, and not a conscious projection of one's essential humanity, as Sartre suggests. These contrasts suggest a broad difference of viewpoint. To capture this difference we will examine the psychoanalytic model of sexual motivation, using Freudian theory as a guide, and then contrast this model with the model supplied by Sartre.

Freud's view of sexual desire rests upon two basic assumptions--the assumption of "infantile sexuality" and the assumption of the "unconscious". For Freud childhood impulses and feelings are relevant to the question of sexual motivation, as is the fact that such impulses and feelings may be lost to memory, or "unconscious". On Freud's view 'sexual desire' cannot be viewed from the

standpoint of "consciousness" alone, since many of the determinants of adult sexual desire remain either repressed or "unconscious". On Freud's view 'sexual desire' cannot be thought of as merely a conscious motive, since the sexual dictates of "consciousness" are to some extent always challenged by the sexual dictates of the "unconscious".

The development of sexual motivation is seen by Freud as a process beset by conflict. Each child must curtail some of the many sensual, pleasure-seeking impulses it feels, learn to "behave", and conform to social nicety. It is Freud's insight that this process of renunciation is never finalized, never settled once and for all. The child's compromise between its impulses and the social conventions it obeys is a weak, tentative compromise, no more binding than most international treaties. Both childhood sensual impulse and social convention continue to influence sexual motivation, although the actual weakness of the compromise which binds them tends to be "unconsciously" distorted or "unconsciously" denied.

The reason the compromise of impulse and convention is drawn "unconsciously" has to do, Freud suggests, with the anxious, trying nature of the compromise, which the child perceives as threatening. Making the best of a bad situation, the child tries to diminish the demand made by its impulses as well as the demand made by convention as a way of reducing the anxiety and guilt raised by these conflicting demands. The child either distorts or denies both sorts of demand--i.e., both the internal demand of impulse and the external demand of convention--as a way of reducing their threatening impact. On Freud's view, the child's compromise of its sensual impulses is not--

or not simply--an adaptive compromise. That would be true if the child brought its impulses into line with the demand of convention, which, in turn, would suggest that the child's repression of its impulses was socially determined. That was not Freud's view. Rather, Freud thought that each child distorted its sensual impulses to the point where a non-threatening compromise could be reached with the demands of convention--demands which it also distorted. Hence the child's repression of its sensual impulses is not merely a matter of social conformity. It is a matter of creativity, for each child is--in part--its own agent of sexual repression.

On Freud's view, then, sexual motivation is based on a rather unstable compromise between bodily impulse and social convention, between the "pleasure principle" and the "reality principle". To preserve this compromise, "defense mechanisms" are employed. Such "defense mechanisms" are numerous, though they may be classified in terms of two general strategies. The objectionable demand--which may originate internally or externally--is either projected outward, "onto the outside world", or else it is repressed, "thrust back into the id".[1] Both strategies, Freud thought, serve to reduce the level of anxiety raised by the objectionable demand. But they do so at the cost of distorting reality--i.e., either the internal reality of the impulses or the external reality of convention. Hence the compromise on which sexual motivation is based is not merely unstable; it is also somewhat unrealistic.

Freud took the "ego" to be the heir of this unstable, somewhat unrealistic compromise. Though many "neo-Freudian" authors see the "ego" as a sort of controlling agency that is well implanted

in everyday reality, such was not Freud's view. Freud thought the "ego" to be neither the spokesman of social convention nor the master of bodily impulse. In his essay, "The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense", Freud depicts the "ego's" ambivalent, unrealistic posture in relation to the demand of "instinct" as well as of "external reality". Freud claims that the "ego" "consciously" recognizes the danger of "external reality", while at the same time "unonsciously" denying its danger in favor of instinctual gratification. Under the terms of this compromise, "Both of the parties to the dispute obtain their share: the instinct is allowed to retain its satisfaction and proper respect is shown to (i.e., external) reality".[2] Hence Freud's view is not that the "ego is the obedient servant of "external reality", but rather that it attempts a rebellious mastery of "external reality". In reaching its "unconscious" compromise, the "ego" in effect divides itself, by outwardly obeying while inwardly disobeying the demands of "external reality".

If we assume the "ego" to be the agent of sexual desire, then Freud is suggesting that in their sexual desires, persons do not strictly follow the lines laid down by social convention or by bodily impulse. Owing to its origin in the "ego's" defensive compromise, sexual desire is not merely impulsive, and not merely conventional. Hence Freud does not really subscribe to the "anatomy is destiny" argument, nor does he claim that sexual motivation derives from social convention. For Freud, sexual motivation is ambivalent as between bodily and conventional demand. Were sexual motivation merely anatomical, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to account for the existence of curtailed, repressed impulses. Were sexual motivation

merely conventional, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to explain why sexual fantasies and wishes are so often subversive of social convention.

Hence on Freud's view 'sexual desire' is not just a manifestation of a bodily drive, as Shaffer suggests, nor is 'sexual desire' a need for communication, as Solomon suggests. Freud does not subscribe to such translations of mental life into biological and social reality. Instead Freud sees sexual motivation as a compromise between both sorts of 'reality'. The characteristics of sexual motivation which Freud most consistently pointed to include its repressiveness and its perversity. Both characteristics raise difficulties for those who find sexual motivation to be basically biological or basically social. Those who would find 'sexual desire' to be an expression of bodily demand must somehow account for the fact that 'sexual desire' is a bodily demand that has been muted--either channeled or repressed under ordinary conditions of development. Those who would find 'sexual desire' to be a conventional sort of desire--like the desire for good conversation--must account for the fact that sexual fantasy is typically both perverse and infantile in character.

Freud's emphasis upon the perverse character of sexual motivation might seem to suggest agreement with Sartre, who thinks that 'sexual desire' is sado-masochistic in character. This, however, is not the case. While Freud thought that sensual demands and aggressive demands were often "fused" or combined, he thought that instinctual aggression--like instinctual sensuality--bears the mark of the "ego's" compromise. If sensual demands are in large part distorted through the process of repression, aggressive demands are in large part dis-

torted through the harsh process of "internalization", a process which Freud took to be a precondition for accepting morality. This suggests that Freud regards the fusion of sensual and aggressive demands as a compromise upon a compromise, not as a matter of necessity. If neither the internal demand of aggression nor the internal demand of sensuality remain uncompromised, then sexual motivation cannot be thought to be either innately sensual nor innately aggressive--as Sartre suggests.

From the standpoint of Freudian theory, sexual motivation may be seen as a compromise of two demands--of the demand of "pleasure" and that of "reality". The ambivalent character of sexual motivation is prefigured in the child's search for pleasurable objects, in which case it is unclear whether the child's goal is the internal goal of securing pleasure or the external goal of securing an object that affords pleasure. On Freud's view, the conflict of sexual goals, as between obedience to the "pleasure principle" and obedience to the "reality principle", is never quite resolved.

Hence to a certain, partly unconscious extent, 'sexual desire' always involves a painful, perhaps guilty, departure from conventional standards of "reality", and at the same time always involves a frustrating sacrifice of sensual pleasure. In this sense sexual motivation as seen by Freud is both counter-conventional and counter-instinctual. The orbit of sexual motivation extends beyond the boundaries posed by conventional "reality", yet remains frustratingly within the boundary of instinctual possibility. It is as though sexual motivation were a difficult sort of bargain, one in which persons ask less than they might of their bodies, yet more than they might

of conventional "reality". In their 'sexual desires' persons ask less than what is internally wanted, yet more than what is externally allowed.

This would suggest that the character of 'sexual desire' is inescapably frustrating, so long as the demands of "pleasure" and "reality" remain irresolvable. Freud was not sanguine about the "ego's" ability to resolve these demands, since on his view the "ego" is split in such a way that it is neither the servant of the pleasure-seeking instincts, nor the servant of conventional "reality". Though it is an agent of compromise, the "ego" is itself compromised, or perhaps over-compromised by the demands it faces. In Freud's terms: "Whatever the ego does in its efforts of defense, whether it seeks to disavow a portion of the real external world or whether it seeks to reject an instinctual demand from the internal world, its success is never complete and unqualified".[3] The price of the "ego's" weakness--of its inability to maintain the compromise it brings into effect--is continued sexual frustration and dissatisfaction. Conventional "reality" can be displaced by the defensive maneuvers of the "ego" to some extent, but it cannot be ignored. Instinctual demands can be disavowed or "repressed" by the "ego", but the "repressed" demands continue to register in dream and fantasy, and remain crucial components of subjective life.

From a Freudian vantage, then, 'sexual desire' bears the stamp of an unsatisfactory compromise between "pleasure" and "reality". 'Sexual desire' is a 'desire' that is, from the standpoint of conventional "reality", overweaning, yet it is also a 'desire' that, curtailed by "repression" and muted by guilt, does not fully express

the body's wide-ranging instinctual demand for sensual pleasure. Ordinarily, many bodily impulses and sexual feelings are not expressed in sexual behavior. The developmental "compromise" most persons reach precludes the complete expression of perverse and of bisexual impulses, and tends to preclude, as well, the expression of feelings of helplessness--the heritage of the child's "nurseling dependency".[4] This suggests that the experience, or expression of 'sexual desire' is imperfect--in that 'sexual desire' is less sensual than might be expected, given its polymorphous, infantile origins.

If on Freud's view 'sexual desire' cannot be thought a straightforward sensual desire, as Sara Ruddick suggests, it also seems the case that 'sexual desire' cannot be thought to be a 'desire' in the sense employed by Anthony Kenny. Given the existence of "unconscious" determinants of 'sexual desire', persons having 'sexual desires' cannot be expected to be able to articulate in a complete way what their desires are for, or what would would count as satisfying them. Given the existence of repressed sexual impulses, it is unreasonable to expect persons to give a complete account of their sexual aims. Given the existence of displaced, unconscious sexual feelings, it seems unreasonable to expect persons to be able to account for all the sexual feelings raised by the sexual objects they choose. Freud's view--unlike Kenny's--allows us a sense of why sexual desire is so often thought--and felt--to be more mysterious a desire than ordinary sorts of desires.

For Freud, then, 'sexual desire' is a desire that is less sensual than bodily capacity allows; it is also less of a 'desire' in Kenny's sense than it might seem to be. 'Sexual desire' is not

only a desire more difficult to acknowledge than other desires; it is also a desire that, more than other desires, is marked by emotional conflicts and by self-imposed internal barriers. For Freud, the "ego's" inability to resolve "pleasure" and "reality" has a divisive, muting impact on sexual feelings. 'Sexual desire' is primarily a bid for instinctual pleasure, but it reflects the barriers raised to instinctual expression during the course of development. Though sexual utopians, such as Norman O. Brown, argue that the removal of such barriers is a practical possibility, Freud remained pessimistic about the idea of complete sexual expression. As he put it: "Something in the nature of the sexual instinct itself is unfavorable to the possibility of complete satisfaction".[5]

Section G: Freud and Sartre

We are now in a position to compare Freud's and Sartre's views concerning sexual desire. For Freud, 'sexual desire' is a phenomenon which bears the stamp of a set of compromises with certain requirements of development--in particular, with the requirement that children establish a sense of their separate being, and their gender, in relation to their parents, as well as the requirement that children abandon their sexual intentions in relation to their parents. According to Freud, the emotional heritage of these compromises is manifest in the typical inability of adults to give complete sensual expression to their desires, and to completely account for their sexual desires in a conscious way. From a Freudian standpoint, the basic obstacle to adult satisfaction--or, in a sense, to the "completion" of sexual desire--is internal and emotional, rather than external and conscious.

Sartre's view of sexual desire is quite different. Sartre views 'sexual desire' as a phenomenon which conforms to the "logic" of "consciousness". Persons who have sexual desires are persons who seek to secure their own subjective recognition. Their sexual desire is seen as a 'desire' for the being of an 'other', that is, for the being which secures subjective "completeness". Hence inter-subjective sexual conflict is unavoidable, for all persons seek a kind of sexual recognition at the expense of the 'other'. On Sartre's view, 'sexual desire' expresses an inherent inter-subjective conflict, a conflict between "consciousness" and the abstract figure of "consciousness" that is designated as the 'other'.

On Freud's view, in contrast, the child's 'other' is the parent. In a sense, the child may be 'threatened' by, and 'incomplete' in relation to its parents. Parents loom large in the eyes of children, and they may be 'threatening' to them, for they stand in the way of instinctual gratification. But this is a contingent matter of personality development, not a matter of metaphysics. The fact that children feel vulnerable and hostile in relation to their parents does not entail that their desires will necessarily assume the form of a reparative project, as Sartre suggests, for the relation between childhood fantasy and adult intention is clearly a contingent relation.

On Sartre's view the 'desire' of "consciousness" to "complete" itself is tantamount to an assertion of subjectivity. For Sartre, "consciousness" and subjectivity are one. On Freud's view the domain of subjectivity is larger than that of "consciousness", for the domain of subjectivity includes feelings, impulses, and desires which may

remain "unconscious". For Sartre the dictates of "consciousness" remain unchallenged by the dictates of the "unconscious". "Consciousness"--unlike the Freudian "ego"--is essentially unified; it is, moreover, an entity that is independent of the demands of instinct and convention. For Sartre, 'sexual desire' bears the marks of "consciousness" and is both unequivocal and unambivalent in character.

On Freud's view the agent of 'sexual desire' is not "consciousness", but the "ego". The "ego" is conceived by Freud as an entity divided into a "conscious" as well as an "unconscious" domain. In contrast with Sartre's idea of "consciousness", the "ego" is a divided, compromised entity, an entity unable to reconcile hedonistic, instinctual demands with the more conventional demand that the sexual instincts be curtailed. The "ego's" inability to completely resolve certain crucial problems of development--such as the problem of complying with the incest taboo--leaves intact the sort of internal conflicts which Freud thought are raised--though often obliquely--by adult sexual desire. Hence for Freud, the 'desire' of 'sexual desire' is not uncompromising in nature; rather, it is a 'desire' that, both in respect of its childhood origins and of its mode of adult expression, is compromised by convention.

For Sartre the basic conflict expressed by 'sexual desire' is interpersonal, not intrapersonal. On his view the meaning of 'sexual desire' is dependent upon a social context, or "situation". Persons having sexual desires for one another assume social roles in relation to each other. They "become" 'master' and 'slave', or, rather, 'sadist' and 'masochist' in relation to one another. Hence it is part of Sartre's argument that the social roles persons assume in

their social situations in relation to one another are an accurate reflection of their sexual desires.

In contrast, Freud's view of 'sexual desire' does not assume a close translation between the sexual desires persons actually feel and the sexual roles they assume in society. In different terms, there is no transparent connection between the manifest content and the latent content of their sexual desires. Persons may enact very aggressive roles in relation to one another, yet remain passive in their desires for one another. Sexual desire is not only a refuge of fantasy; it is also a vehicle for compensation, a vehicle through which persons may repudiate their social situation. The fact that the sexual desires of persons are often steeped in fantasies that totally repudiate their accustomed roles and statuses suggests support for Freud's position.

The basic difference between Freud and Sartre is that Sartre thinks 'sexual desire' is a phenomenon of consciousness that is predetermined by ontological considerations, whereas Freud thinks that 'sexual desire' is an instinctual phenonemon that is contingent upon conditions of development. This basic difference reflects the many other differences in their theoretical viewpoints. Sartre attempts to translate mental life into the conscious, social reality of appropriation and domination. Freud depicts mental life as itself a compromise between an instinctual "reality" and a conventional "reality". Sartre thinks 'sexual desire' is a "project" of consciousness, and construes 'consciousness' as something that is sovereign and imperious. Freud thinks 'sexual desire' issues from the compromise of the "ego", an entity that is weak, governed by faction, and partly unconscious.

For Sartre, 'sexual desire' is a token of human authenticity because it is a "project" of consciousness, and consciousness is in principle free. For Freud, 'sexual desire' is a token of human inauthenticity because it is a compromise of human capacity, and because it is a phenomenon partly propelled by repressed impulses and accompanied by feelings displaced from their original targets, and turned inward. Sartre views sexual desire as a desire for appropriation, a desire that is uncompromising in nature. Freud views sexual desire as a desire for sensual pleasure, a desire that is compromised by the conventions of family and society.

Most importantly, Freud's work does not support Sartre's idea that there is a logical connection between 'sexual desire' and the desire for domination. Though Freud suggests numerous ways in which 'sexual desire' may become imbued with feelings of hostility and resentment, he does not suggest that there is any logical necessity for this being the case. On Freud's view, 'sexual desire' is not inherently sado-masochistic, as Sartre suggests; it is, instead, potentially so. Freud's reference to "the universal tendency to debasement" is a "tendency", not an intrinsic characteristic. Though Freud is certainly not one to minimize the difficulty of combining affection and 'sexual desire', his view of 'sexual desire' precludes support for the idea that 'sexual desire', per se, constitutes an assault on others. Hence Freud's view, unlike Sartre's, leaves open the possibility of reducing the level of hostility which, at present, seems to characterize sexual desire.

Section H: Conclusion

In short, the psychoanalytic model of sexual desire challenges the plausibility of both the phenomenological, as well as the moral model of sexual desire. On the psychoanalytic view, sexual desire cannot be thought an authentic form of self-expression, as Sartre suggests, since the aim of sexual desire is itself a compromise of human sensual capacity, a compromise which persons tend to remain unconscious of. On the psychoanalytic view, sexual desire is seen as a partly unconscious phenomenon, and therefore cannot be thought an entirely conscious "project", as Sartre suggests. If sexual desire is to be construed as projection, the psychoanalytic case suggests that sexual desire is less a projection of one's conscious freedom than a projection of one's unconscious, childhood conflicts.

The psychoanalytic model also suggests that sexual desire itself is a fragile basis for interpersonal relations of moral value. The latent, unconscious content of sexual desire often includes hostile fantasies, and feelings of detachment and anonymity. On the psychoanalytic view, sexual desire cannot easily be thought of as an experience characterized both by affectionate bonding and by sensual embodiment, as both Nagel and Ruddick suggest, since these are aims that are often emotionally incompatible. From a psychoanalytic viewpoint, the unification of such feelings--as well as of auto-erotic and "attachment-type" feelings--is seen as typically quite problematic. In addition, sexual desire is seen as a phenomenon characterized by a degree of emotional ambivalence--something which itself seems a barrier to the sort of openness and intimacy championed by Nagel and Ruddick.

On the psychoanalytic model, sexual desire is seen as a more complex emotional phenomenon than either phenomenologists like Sartre or moralists like Nagel and Ruddick suggest. As against Sartre, sexual desire is seen as an experience that is partly repressive, rather than entirely conscious in character. As against Nagel and Ruddick, sexual desire is seen as an experience that is partly ambivalent, rather than straightforwardly affectionate and sensual in character.

From a Freudian viewpoint the repressive, ambivalent character of sexual desire is to some extent inescapable. Compromises of sexual impulses and sexual feelings are required of all children, and the effects of such compromises influence adult sexual behavior. The sexual desires of all persons are seen as simultaneously influenced by the "world" of childlike wish and fantasy, as well as by the "world" of adult expectation and convention. To conceive of sexual desire as a desire for 'realistic pleasure', as Freud does, captures the sense in which persons experience their sexual desires as a tension between spontaneous sensual aims and the more practical aim of securing realistic gratification. From the standpoint of sexual desire, all persons are both pleasure-seeking child and realistic adult; they are both overweaning and prudent; they incline towards auto-eroticism as well as attachment to another; they are--though perhaps imperceptibly--both pervert and solid citizen.

FOOTNOTES

Section B

[1]Cf. Theodore Lidz, The Person, New York: Basic Books, 1968. pp. 354-55, and 358-59.

[2]Robert Stoller, Sexual Excitement, New York: Pantheon Books, 1979. p. 9.

[3]Ibid., Stoller, p. 6.

Section C

[1]Otto Kernberg, Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, New York: Jason Aronson, 1975.

[2]Ibid., Kernberg, p. 126.

[3]Ibid., p. 324.

[4]Ibid., p. 17.

[5]Cf. "Barriers to Falling and Remaining in Love", in Kernberg, Object Relations Theory and Clinical Psychoanalysis, New York: Jason Aronson.

Section D

[1]Sigmund Freud, "On the Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", Standard Edition, Vol. 11, p. 185.

[2]Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, New York: Norton, 1979, p. 204.

[3]Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Motherhood, U. of Cal. Press, 1978. Chapt. 7.

[4]Erica Jong, Fear of Flying, Signet Press, 1973, p. 12.

Section E

[1]Cf. Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur, Harper Press, 1977, and
Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Motherhood, op. cit.

Section F

[1]Anna Freud, The Ego and the Mechanisms of Defense, International Univ. Press, p. 122.

[2]Sigmund Freud, "The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defense", Standard Edition, Vol. XXIII

[3]Sigmund Freud, An Outline of Psychoanalysis, Norton Edit., p. 61.

[4]I believe this phrase should be attributed to Jacques Lacan, in The Language of the Self, trans. Anthony Wilden, New York: Delta Books, 1975.

[5]Freud, "The Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love", Op. Cit., p. 188.

CHAPTER FIVE

If a person continues to see only giants, it means he is still looking at the world through the eyes of a child. I have a feeling that man's fear of woman comes from having first seen her as the mother, creator of men.

Anais Nin

Diary, 1931-1934

Section A: Introduction

The psychoanalytic view of sexual desire that has been advanced suggests a number of ways in which the sexual desires of men and women are similar. Some women, as well as some men, experience their sexual desires with feelings of hostility and indifference. Both men and women often fantasize that sex is a struggle for power, and imagine that sexual relations are relations of domination and control. Both men and women place erotic value on body parts, rather than the person attached to those parts, and thereby treat their sexual partners in dehumanizing ways. In addition, though a "double standard" of sexual choice seems more characteristic of men than women, some research suggests this may be due to the greater sexual freedom men enjoy, and that women also find sexual relations more "erotic" with partners for whom they feel no deep commitment.[1] Hence--despite other, outward differences, there is inward similarity: the sexual desires of both men and women are in some measure dehumanizing, hostile, and philanderous.

Despite these similarities, it is quite apparent--not only to feminists--that woman's sexual situation is different from man's. Women are socially celebrated as sex objects; men usually are not. Though both men and women may practice sexual violence upon each other, women cannot use force against men in the way that men can against women. When men are raped, it is by other men, not by women. In addition, it is clear--in our society at least--that women are denied the variety of sexual outlets that are permitted to men. Most bordellos cater only to men's sexual enjoyment, and this is true as well of most public forms of pornography. Most observers believe

that marriage is sexually more burdensome for women than men, since, both at law and in custom, violence against women is more likely to be tolerated.

Hence the psychological similarity between man's and woman's sexual desire may seem somewhat beside the point. The critical point is that the vast difference in social position of men and women may outweigh whatever psychological parity exists between them, sexually. The positions we examine in Chapter Five--those of Simone de Beauvoir, Juliet Mitchell, and Nancy Chodorow, respectively--offer different assessments of woman's social position and of its bearing on woman's sexuality.

De Beauvoir extends the phenomenological view of sexuality to account for the difference in man's and woman's sexuality. For de Beauvoir, woman's sexuality has to do with woman's position in human consciousness. According to de Beauvoir, woman is consciously defined as 'other': 'she' is perceived as socially invisible, as lacking man's transcendent qualities, as a being without autonomy. For de Beauvoir, since woman is less recognized as an autonomous being, she thinks herself less autonomous than man: women, unlike men, "do not authentically assume a subjective attitude". For de Beauvoir, the lack of social recognition leaves woman alienated from her own desires, and consigns her to relations with man that are passive and dependent. De Beauvoir's position--that woman's sexuality is in effect a problem of consciousness--suggests that woman's sexual situation will improve when woman denies her alterity and assumes the transcendent qualities hitherto associated with man.

In sharp contrast to de Beauvoir's position is that of Juliet

Mitchell, who defends Freud's views concerning woman's sexuality. For Mitchell, woman's sexuality is most usefully seen as connected with the "task" of gender differentiation, a "task" requiring the the repression of her masculinity. The required repression is so thorough that--in Lasch's words--"passivity comes to resemble a fact of nature, an inherent attribute of womanhood".[2] If on de Beauvoir's view the crucial feature of woman's sexuality is her social invisibility, on Mitchell's view the crucial feature of woman's sexuality is the unconscious repression to which it is subject. Woman's sexuality is situated, not in the realm of human consciousness, but unconsciously, in the realm of patriarchal culture. Hence woman's sexual situation cannot be improved by opting for transcendence, as de Beauvoir suggests, or by raising the consciousness of individual women. Rather, what is required is the wholesale dismantling of patriarchal culture.

A third view of woman's sexuality is provided by Nancy Chodorow, a feminist who attempts to reconcile sociological and psychoanalytic insights. On Chodorow's account, the crucial feature of woman's sexuality is neither woman's greater social invisibility--as de Beauvoir suggests--nor woman's greater repressive "tasks"--as Mitchell suggests. Rather, it is woman's greater "relational potential".[3] According to Chodorow, given the shape of the contemporary family--in which the 'primary parent' is the mother--woman's sexuality, in general, is more empathic and relationally oriented, and thereby less object oriented, than man's sexuality. This difference in typical emotional development makes it more likely that women will assume nurturing tasks, and provide child care--thereby "reproducing" the institution of "motherhood".

This difference in emotional pattern suggests a difference in the way that men and women tend to experience their sexual desire. Women tend to feel a sense of connection to their sexual objects, whereas men tend to feel a sense of separation from their sexual objects. This suggests that women are both advantaged and disadvantaged in sexual relationships. Insofar as sexual relationships are just another species of competitive relationship, women are disadvantaged, for they are less able to adopt an impersonal view of their relationship, which is useful in maintaining a competitive attitude. On the other hand, insofar as sexual relationships provide an alternative to competition, it is men who are disadvantaged, since it is more difficult for men to abandon their competitive attitudes, and to share their feelings in the relationships they enter.

Chodorow's view is a refinement of both de Beauvoir's and Mitchell's views. As against de Beauvoir, Chodorow suggests that the issue of autonomy is not as crucial to woman's sexual experience as it is to man's sexual experience. If maintaining a separate sense of self in sexual relationships is of less importance for women than men, that would suggest a sense in which women are less alienated in their sexuality--rather than more alienated, as de Beauvoir claims. As against Mitchell's view, Chodorow suggests that the emotional difficulty faced by men in denying their 'femininity' is greater, typically, than is the difficulty faced by women in repressing their 'masculine' characteristics. In consequence, man's fear of the 'feminine' would seem to have a greater impact upon sexual relationships than would woman's disappointed expectation of 'masculinity'. If that is the case, it would argue that a sense of disappointment

regarding gender is of greater sexual moment in the case of men than of women--the very opposite of what Mitchell, following Freud, suggests.

Chodorow's account of woman's sexuality is a challenge both to Freud's views about woman's sexuality, as well as to the phenomenological view of sexuality--a view which de Beauvoir, following Hegel, endorses. In repudiating these approaches, Chodorow suggests that the issues of conscious autonomy and of unconscious gender--issues which are at the focus of de Beauvoir's and Mitchell's accounts, respectively--are issues both less crucial and less problematic in respect to woman's sexuality than in respect to man's sexuality. On Chodorow's view, it is the contemporary man, not the contemporary woman, who has greater difficulty expressing sexual feeling, and who is in this emotional sense more alienated from his sexual desire. In addition, it is the contemporary man, not the contemporary woman, who is both more defensive and insecure about his gender, and who is thereby more threatened by sexual desire, as well as by sexual relations in general.

Section B: Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex

Simone de Beauvoir's the Second Sex is an inquiry into woman's social situation from a phenomenological standpoint. For de Beauvoir, woman has been defined an "inessential being" throughout recorded history; woman is 'other'. Though individual women may transcend their alterity, from the vantage of consciousness 'woman' is a sexual being who is alienated from her own desires. Woman's sexuality bears the stamp of woman's alterity in human consciousness.

De Beauvoir's thought bears great affinity to that of Hegel. Woman is consigned to the role of 'other' in much the same way that the loser of the Hegelian struggle for recognition is consigned to the role of 'slave'. For de Beauvoir the roles of man and woman, once instantiated, have remained frozen; history does not, as in Hegel's thought, precipitate a dialectical change in the relation between man and woman.

De Beauvoir conceives of man and woman as asymmetric positions in human consciousness. Hence she suggests that the sexes are unlike electrical poles of opposite charge, since "man represents both the positive and the neutral..whereas woman represents only the negative".[1] It is man, not woman, who evokes the idea of "neutral subjectivity"--it is the pronoun, 'he', and not 'she', that is used to designate persons regardless of gender. With respect to human sexuality, the case is much the same: human sexuality is generally perceived in relation to man's sexual desire.

According to de Beauvoir, most philosophical accounts of human sexuality assume woman's invisibility. In this vein, de Beauvoir cites Hegel's account of sexual intercourse as an act in which man utilizes woman's body to achieve transcendence. For Hegel, sexual intercourse thereby achieves "unity from differentiation",[2] but the achievement is essentially man's. On de Beauvoir's view the flaw of Hegel's account is not the idea that man thinks himself as one with the human species--for this is an accurate description of the way things are--but rather Hegel's supposition that there is a biological basis for man's hubris. For de Beauvoir, as for Sartre, biological considerations are contingent--and not essential--determinants of

sexuality. Sexuality is first and foremost a phenomenon of consciousness. Though the biological demands—the "species demands"--placed upon woman are onerous, society itself is "not a species".[3] Woman's alterity is not a problem of nature; it is a problem of second nature.

In her psychology de Beauvoir sides with existential psychology, not psychoanalytic psychology. Since woman is free in an existential sense, she cannot be thought the "plaything of contradictory drives".[4] Woman is not "plaything" but chooser. She hesitates "between the role of object, 'other' which is offered her and the assertion of her liberty".[5] Though de Beauvoir does not deny the existence of the unconscious, she interprets it so as to make its existence compatible with free choice. Woman's alterity is not a matter of unconscious fiat; it is a matter of conscious choice. In accounting for the origin of woman's alterity, de Beauvoir adapts Hegel's account of a primal struggle for human recognition. Man and woman--like the roles of 'master' and 'slave'--are conceived in struggle. In de Beauvoir's version, however, woman--unlike Hegel's coerced 'slave'--declines to fight. Hence woman's alterity bears the stamp of woman's choice--a choice to defer to man's greater willingness to fight.

Despite their existential equality, man and woman are not social equals, for man occupies the superior place in human thought, and woman is consigned to the role of 'other'. In this vein de Beauvoir suggests that even those myths in which woman is venerated actually suppose her alterity by suggesting that woman is less human, and more like an animal or a divinity, than man. Given woman's alterity, the possibility that man and woman relate to one another as human beings on an equal footing is closed. Woman differs from Hegel's

'slave'. The 'slave' is "nothing but a man in servitude, not different but inferior";[6] in contrast, woman is perceived as both different and inferior. The 'slave' is proven inferior in battle, but is nonetheless the same sort of being as the 'master'. 'Woman' is 'other'; she is a being of a different sort, inferior without proof.

Woman is not simply the 'other'; she is man's 'other', perceived in relation to man's need to be recognized by a separate being who does not threaten. Thus de Beauvoir asserts, in a statement ringing with Hegelian paradox: "True alterity is that of a consciousness separate from mine and substantially identical with mine".[7] The paradox here--how woman may be different as well as identical with man--dissolves once it is allowed that woman is man's projection; she is his creation, his idea of difference. Man, falsely assuming a shared identity with woman, projects his conception of difference on to her. In this sense man creates woman in his image, and molds her to his desire. To do this man believes woman to be a being beyond the human conceptual realm; 'she' is thought both less 'natural' and more 'natural' than he. In this vein de Beauvoir analyzes the use of ornament: "Costumes and styles are often devoted to cutting off the feminine body from any possible transcendence: Chinese women with bound feet could scarcely walk; the polished fingernails of the Hollywood star deprive her of her hands.."[8] But if the Hollywood star is idealized, and thereby removed from nature, most women are perceived as far closer to nature, as in fact more animal-like, than man. Woman is--at one and the same time--"removed from nature and made to share more intimately with it".[9] Man alternately idealizes and degrades woman. Woman is imagined to be both goddess and whore.

The distorted perception of woman is alienating not only to women but to men as well. The man who desires woman as 'other' desires his projection, not a real person. Woman is a fiction. Hence if man seeks recognition through desire, it is not the recognition of actual women, but rather a form of self-recognition, that is his goal. In other words, man's sexuality may be thought to be characterized by its circularity, in that man's desire for woman is based upon a conception of difference that ultimately derives from man's conceptual sovereignty, and from his ability to make the inherent vulnerability of consciousness serve his own ends.

De Beauvoir suggests that woman's sexuality is commonly seen as a mystery, as though it were something outside the orbit of human sexuality. Though human sexual desire may be insistent and impetuous, woman's sexual desire coincides with man's image of it. It is something passive, inert, mysterious. "Feminine sex desire is the soft throbbing of a mollusk..man dives upon his prey like the eagle and the hawk; woman lies in wait like the carnivorous plant, the bog, in which insects and children are swallowed up".[10] Woman's sexual desire is imbued with man's false perception; it is demure and yielding; it is mysterious without being demanding. On de Beauvoir's formulation, woman's sexuality is embedded in her given alterity. If man's sexual desire asserts his humanity, woman's sexual desire merely reflects her alterity. In both cases de Beauvoir sees the phenomenon of sexual desire as wholly a phenomenon of consciousness; it is something defined by conscious expectations.

De Beauvoir's formulation downplays the body's contribution to sexual desire. Hence there is little mention of the variety of

sexual impulses and sexual feelings that contribute to sexual experience. The possibility that sexual impulses and feelings are rooted in infantile longings which pre-date conscious memory is given little credence by de Beauvoir. On her view the body's contribution to sex is an interruption of the stream of consciousness, an interruption that is without causal effect. De Beauvoir's view of the relation between bodily demand and sexual experience is much like Sartre's: both regard the body as something causally independent of the projects of consciousness, as something that is inessential to those projects.

De Beauvoir's view of sexual love is of a piece with her view of sexual desire. Woman's love, like woman's desire, is less an affair of glands than of mirrors. The woman in love "is another incarnation of the loved one, his reflection, his double; she is he".[11] The woman in love incarnates man's image. Writing about emotions, de Beauvoir turns them into images. Woman's love is not woman's feeling; it is man's reflection.

If for Sartre all sexual encounters "founder of the reef of solipsism", for de Beauvoir all (hetero-sexual) encounters founder on the reef of man's consciousness--the selfsame consciousness which defines woman as 'other'. Though de Beauvoir's claim is a telling claim about gender roles--about the roles of man and woman in society--it seems less telling as a claim about sexual desire. Sexual desire is not an entirely social phenomenon, nor is it an entirely conscious phenomenon. If the findings of psychoanalysis are to be credited, actual men and women are both man and woman in their sexual fantasies. Since both men and women repudiate certain of their desires in the course of development, there is a sense in which, emotionally, both

men and women are 'others'. Further, the sexual desires of both men and women alike may become narcissistically inflated in ways which preclude sexual intimacy. In this ultimately selfish sense, both women and men--not man alone--are transcendent, egoistic beings, sovereign in their desire.

There are other similarities as well. Both men and women have difficulty reconciling the sensual with the emotional rewards of sexual experience. Both tend to alternately emphasize sex or love, bodily sensuality or emotional gratification. Both men and women pursue sexual endeavors which may be self-affirming or self-denying, endeavors which may either enhance or menace personal identity. For both men and women, sexuality may become an instrument of power or of political outlook, but there is no necessity for this being the case. Hence from the standpoint of sexual desire actual men and women--not man and woman--seem not nearly so different as de Beauvoir suggests.

Section C: Conclusions

De Beauvoir extends the phenomenological view of sexuality in an attempt to differentiate man's sexuality from woman's sexuality. The strength of de Beauvoir's view is its insistence that woman's place in consciousness is not the same as man's. It is on this point that de Beauvoir challenges the accounts of sexuality supplied by Hegel and Sartre, both of whom offer accounts of human sexuality without mentioning women, and thereby bear out de Beauvoir's claim that, from the standpoint of philosophical concern, woman is an invisible being.

The weakness of de Beauvoir's view lies in its reliance upon

the assumption that sexuality and sexual desire are conscious phenomena. Hegel's view of 'desire'--as we have seen--is that of an attempt to achieve social recognition, by violent means if necessary. De Beauvoir adapts Hegel's view in order to distinguish man's and woman's sexuality. According to de Beauvoir, the hypothetical equality that obtains in the case of 'master' and 'slave' does not obtain in the case of man and woman. Woman, unlike Hegel's 'slave', is not perceived as a free being, involved in reciprocal relations, since she is thought to be 'other'. Man's sexuality is marked by the social recognition it is accorded, a social recognition that is denied woman's sexuality. Man is perceived as sexual 'hawk'; woman is perceived as sexual 'prey'. Man's sexuality is socially perspicuous; woman's is invisible.

While this may be a telling view with regard to the more visible, aggressive role man inherits in a society that, like our own, extols masculinity and denigrates femininity, it does not seem telling with regard to the sexual preferences and sexual feelings of actual men and women, who may in large part repudiate their masculinity or femininity in their sexual desires. Psychologically, it may be more correct to think of man and woman alike as both 'hawk' and 'prey'. So far as the greater social recognition accorded man's sexuality, this does not seem indicative of man's greater sexual freedom, as de Beauvoir suggests. While it may be the case that man is characteristically less inhibited in making sexual choices, it also seems the case that woman is characteristically less inhibited in expressing her sexual feelings--which is an equally valid aspect of sexual freedom. At any rate, the psychological case seems more complex

than de Beauvoir's phenomenological framework allows.

De Beauvoir treats questions of sexuality as a reflection of man's role and woman's role in consciousness. By making sexuality contingent upon the mode of consciousness one adopts, de Beauvoir suggests that the phenomenon of human sexuality is wholly within the domain of consciousness, and that sexual desire is essentially a role governed phenomenon. This is a position which denies the existence of the unconscious and which minimizes the complex and uncertain character of sexual development, both of which claims are crucial to a psychoanalytic view of sexuality.

Section D: Juliet Mitchell's Psychoanalysis and Feminism

Juliet Mitchell is a feminist who is not only attentive to psychoanalysis, but who defends most of Freud's views concerning women. If on de Beauvoir's view the characteristic feature of woman's sexuality is that it is less free and autonomous than man's, on Juliet Mitchell's view the characteristic feature of woman's sexuality is the greater repressiveness to which it is subject, during 'normal' development. Mitchell, echoing Freud, assumes that woman's 'normal' role is to reproduce the species, and that it is in light of this expectation--the expectation of 'normal' womanhood--that woman's sexuality should properly be seen. As Mitchell puts it, "the question of the path to 'normal' womanhood....subsumes the specific subject of female sexuality".[1]

Taken as a psychoanalytic concept, the idea of 'normal' sexuality is equivocal. In the individual case, sexuality bears the stamp of instinctual components that are by turns diverse, inverse, and

perverse. These components are compromised against social conventions, and the resulting compromise--even if it can be judged 'normal'--remains a precarious compromise, one that is subject to regression. As Mitchell puts it: 'normal' sexuality "assumes its form only as it travels over a long and tortuous path, maybe eventually, and even then only precariously, establishing itself".[2] In the individual case, then, 'normal' sexuality is something that is but a moment's remove from the 'abnormal' components which comprise it.

The psychoanalytic view as to what constitutes 'normal' sexuality in the general case is quite different from the psychoanalytic view as to 'normal' sexuality in the individual case. If individual, 'normal' sexuality is seen as problematic, general, 'normal' sexual- it is thought of as something far less problematic, since it is associated with what counts, from a conventional standpoint, as 'manhood' or 'womanhood'. While psychoanalysis, especially Fredian psychoanalysis, offers a critical approach to the idea of individual 'normality', it is relatively uncritical about the idea of 'normality' per se. With respect to the process of individual sexual development, the dictum 'anatomy is destiny' makes little sense, since boys may experience a 'feminine' development, and girls may experience a 'masculine' development. But with respect to the (purported) culmination of that development, anatomy is destiny, since it is expected that girls will usually assume 'normal' feminine' roles and boys will usually assume 'normal' 'masculine' roles. It is on the basis of the latter, conventional assumption, that Freudian thought generates the claim that woman's sexuality requires a greater degree of repression and renunciation than man's sexuality.

Keeping in mind this equivocal sense of what counts as 'normal' sexuality, let us examine the Freudian schema of sexual development, which Juliet Mitchell defends. On this schema, both boys and girls begin their sexual development in what might be called an "original position" in relation to their mother. The "original position" is thought to be 'masculine' in two senses: it is a 'position' oriented toward the 'feminine' object of the mother, and characterized by an 'active' mode. The crucial consequence of this is that boys and girls do not begin as equals in the "original position", since boys 'begin' in an orientation and mode that are in accord with 'normal' expectations of 'masculinity', while girls 'begin' in an orientation and mode which they must repudiate if they are to conform to 'normal' expectations of 'femininity'.

Hence it is Freud's view that 'normal' sexual development demands a greater sacrifice from girls than from boys. Girls must abandon their 'masculine' attraction to their mother, and they must also shift their conception of their body away from an 'active' mode, and embrace a conception that is 'passive' and 'feminine' in mode. Neither this shift of mode nor this shift of object orientation is required in the case of boys, since their "original", 'active' attraction to their mother meets with conventional expectations. In contrast, girls must undertake a sexual "about face", both by repudiating their "original" 'masculine' wishes and expectations and by redirecting their sexual interest from the mother to their father. The girl's 'task'--that of repressively creating her 'femininity'--also requires a transformation of bodily thinking so as to give pride of place to the vagina--an organ thought 'passive' in its unconscious significance.

Though the Freudian schema may partly explain how a stigmatized, less privileged conception of 'femininity' is unconsciously transmitted, it does not seem a sufficient account of sexual development, and in fact contradicts other crucial psychoanalytic assumptions concerning development. It is a staple of psychoanalytic thought, for example, that there is nothing inevitable about the process of sexual development, since the sexual orientation, mode, and aims of each individual are a compromise between instinct and social convention. The schema contradicts this by assuming that all children 'begin' in a conventionally 'masculine' "position"--a claim which entails that the route to 'normality' is inherently less problematic for boys than for girls.

It is also a staple of psychoanalytic thought that there is no such thing as innate 'masculinity' or 'femininity', since all children are bisexual, in that they have sexual feelings and desires for both parents. The schema contradicts this by suggesting that heterosexual development is generally less problematic for boys than girls. In addition, it is a staple of psychoanalytic thought that children perceive their bodies as vulnerable in relation to the larger bodies of their parents. The schema contradicts this by treating the vulnerability of boys as something having its basis in fantasy, and the vulnerability of girls as something having a factual basis: it is expected that boys experience their bodies as "threatened" by castration, whereas it is expected that girls experience their bodies as if they were--in "fact"--the mutilated bodies of boys.

By endorsing the Freudian schema, Mitchell depicts woman's sexuality in the light of conventional, patriarchal expectations. Woman's sexuality is 'normally' expected to be a 'passive' sort of

sexuality, firmly based upon the repression of her 'masculine' expectations and inclinations. Given the 'feminine' assignment, it is expected that women are more likely to be passive in their sexual wishes, and more likely to seek pleasure through pain, than men. In addition, it is expected that women will want to have babies--since it is thought that 'having a baby' provides unconscious recompense for the "fact" of castration. Moreover, the 'feminine' assignment is itself seen as a stigmatized assignment. The unconscious process by which girls become 'feminine' is seen as a process of accepting a disadvantaged, inferior position. In speaking of the unconscious significance of 'femininity' Mitchell claims: "the feminine place is the only and ever-present alternative to where anyone really wants to be--in the male position in the patriarchal order".[3] To accept the 'feminine' assignment is to accept the second-best gender assignment in the human order.

Mitchell, following Freud, sees sexual development as largely dependent on the unconscious processes through which children acquire their sense of gender. Little attention is given to how children consciously come to accept their gender, or to such issues as the quality of parenting, or the question whether mother and father both "parent". These omissions seem important. While it may be true that the discovery of gender difference is fraught with unconscious, stigmatic significance, this seems an issue somewhat independent of the conscious ways in which children assimilate their gender--ways which may partly offset their unconscious discovery of gender difference. What seems most likely is that sexual development is a process involving both conscious and unconscious determinants and that, where

de Beauvoir has over-emphasized the impact of the conscious factors, Mitchell has over-emphasized the impact of unconscious factors.

For Mitchell, woman's sexuality is characterized by a more roundabout, repressive development than is man's sexuality. The strength of Mitchell's position lies in the claim that there is a stigmatized, unconscious underpinning for what is conventionally considered the 'norm' of woman's sexuality. This suggests that woman's sexuality may be less malleable a form of personal or political expression that many feminists have claimed; it also suggests that the process of sexual "consciousness raising" is more difficult than many feminists have supposed. The weakness of Mitchell's positon is that, in defending Freud, she defends a broad spectrum of quite conventional patriarchal assumptions concerning 'femininity'--assumptions which contradict the general psychoanalytic view that human sexuality is both non-innate and non-conventional in character, an area of endeavor with very little of the "inevitable" about it.

Section E: Conclusions

In their investigations, both de Beauvoir and Mitchell find women to be sexually disadvantaged in society. For de Beauvoir, this is a matter of woman's invisibility in consciousness; woman is more likely than man to be sexually misperceived, unnoticed, or misunderstood. This claim is typified by the fact that 'sexual intercourse', as ordinarily understood, is thought to be an activity initiated by male arousal and terminated by male orgasm. For Mitchell, woman's disadvantage has to do with the unconsciously exaggerated stigma of

the 'femininity' she is 'normally' consigned to, under patriarchy. Mitchell's emphasis partly explains the hostility that is quite pervasive in ordinary hetero-sexual encounters--by suggesting there is a basis for this hostility in man's unconsciously exaggerated fears of what is 'feminine' and in woman's unconsciously exaggerated envy of what is 'masculine'.

Both de Beauvoir and Mitchell, however, view woman's sexuality from a conventional perspective. Both treat the gender distinction as a relatively stable, non-arbitrary distinction, even though de Beauvoir interprets 'gender' as a matter of one's conscious role and Mitchell interprets 'gender' as a matter of one's unconscious sexual orientation. Thus de Beauvoir speaks of men and women as 'man' and 'woman'. Mitchell speaks of the 'norms' of 'masculinity' and 'femininity' as if they were inherent in the sort of "civilization" that cannot be other than patriarchal. De Beauvoir holds that the greater sexual passivity of women derives from the roles of 'man' and 'woman' that are rooted in human consciousness, and transmitted historically. Mitchell holds that the greater sexual repressiveness of women largely derives from the hypothetical--yet unavoidable--"original position" in which girls begin their sexual development. Both assume that there is some persistent basis for the gender distinctions they perceive. Thus de Beauvoir finds 'alterity' an intrinsic condition of human consciousness, and Mitchell finds that the stigma attached to 'femininity' is among the most deeply recalcitrant features of the unconscious. Though de Beauvoir and Mitchell disagree whether gender is primarily polarized in human consciousness or unconsciousness, both assume that the gender distinction is one that is relatively fixed and stable within

human society, and thereby relatively impervious to social reform. Though de Beauvoir allows that women may transcend their alterity through existential choice, and though Mitchell allows that patriarchy--as one of the "contradictions" of late capitalism--may soon collapse, neither thinker critically addresses the conditions which contribute to the polarization of gender.

Section F: Nancy Chodorow's The Reproduction of Motherhood

Nancy Chodorow is a feminist who adopts a less conventional, more critical perspective on the sexual significance of gender, a perspective which allows for the possibility of social reform. Chodorow treats the gender distinction not as a function of cultural consciousness or cultural unconsciousness but rather as a function of the sorts of developmental patterns which derive from the fact that for children of both sexes the first and primary parent is the mother. This is a condition that is itself remediable, and it is no small part of Chodorow's case that, were co-parenting more common, the brute fact of gender would have a less polarizing effect upon adult sexuality than is now the case.

Chodorow's view contrasts with that of de Beauvoir. De Beauvoir sees boys as advantaged and girls as disadvantaged by the cultural inheritance both are born into. On her line of thought, boys inherit an autonomous sense of self, an inheritance which girls do not share in. On Chodorow's view, both boys and girls are born into the nuclear family--a "world" circumscribed by the materal relation. It is boys, more so than girls, who are expected to depart from this "world"--and to separate from their mothers in an abrupt fashion. In contrast

with what de Beauvoir says, it is boys, more so than girls, who must become 'others' in the first "world" they enter--the "world" of the maternal relation.

On Chodorow's view, ordinary development is such that girls remain within the "world" of the maternal relation longer than do boys. Girls depart this "world" less abruptly than do boys, and its influence is more continuous with the expectation that they--more so than boys--will be able to relate to others in empathic, "relational" ways. In this way, the fact that girls are raised by mothers makes it more likely that they will one day assume a strongly relational, parental role. In contrast with what de Beauvoir says, the point is not that girls undergo a more alienating self-development than boys; it is that their development is somewhat less individualistic, or more relational, than that of boys. In Chodorow's terms: "the basic feminine sense of self is connected to the world, the basic masculine sense of self is separate".[1]

This difference of developmental pattern suggests a number of typical differences between the sexes, which may be seen as advantages or disadvantages, depending on the relative value attached to the importance of autonomous selfhood. As Chodorow suggests, the more abrupt separation that is required of boys is likely to better prepare them for entry into the highly competitive, somewhat impersonal world of work. But the same characteristic that seems advantageous in the work-world seems disadvantageous in the world of interpersonal relations, since the 'masculine' emphasis on self-separateness involves a sense of remaining apart from the persons to whom one is most strongly attracted. While the more abrupt separa-

tion of the boy tends to provide an emotional basis for "standing on his own two feet", it also leaves him somewhat more estranged from the world of social relations than is the case with girls, as well as somewhat less able to admit relational feelings, such as the feeling of dependency.

Chodorow's view also brings into question the assumption of a 'masculine' advantage in sexual development--an assumption made by Freud and defended by Mitchell. On Chodorow's view, the issue of separation is tied up with the issue of gender--with a child's sense of its 'masculinity' or 'femininity'. For boys, the issue of separation is closely related to the achievement of 'masculinity'. A return to the "world" of the maternal relation is seen as a move in a 'feminine' direction. A boy's dependence on his mother, his continued attachment to her, or his emotional identification with her are all things which "represent that which is not masculine".[2] For girls, the issue of relation or of a relational sense of self is thought to be more harmonious with the achievement of 'femininity'. If the "world" of the maternal relation may be thought the "original position" of sexual development, it seems plain that that position is more continuous with the expectation of 'femininity' than that of 'masculinity'.

Where the Freudian schema suggests that both sexes "begin" in a 'masculine' situation, Chodorow's emphasis on the "world" of the maternal relation suggests a more 'feminine' baseline for gauging sexual development. On the Freudian schema, girls are immersed in a 'masculine' "original position", something that can be surmounted only by thoroughgoing repression. On Chodorow's schema, the requirement that boys develop a separate sense of self--and thereby deny

their 'femininity'--is treated as a problem that is fully commensurate with that of the girl's repression of her 'masculine' inclinations. The Freudian schema suggests that the gender expectations of all children are originally 'masculine', and that girls must invent their 'femininity' in a repressive, oblique fashion. Chodorow counters this suggestion by claiming that all children are originally involved in a relation with their mother, a relation which boys must deny if they are to meet the expectation of 'masculinity'.

Chodorow's perspective on sexual development suggests emotional differences in the way that men and women tend to experience their sexual desires. Women tend to have a more relational orientation to sexuality, because women are more likely to define themselves empathically, through the relationships they enter, rather than apart from them. Men tend to have more of an object orientation to sexuality, because men are more likely to define themselves as separate beings within the relationships they enter. Given their relational orientation, women are more likely to value emotional fulfillment than men; conversely, given their object orientation, men are more likely to value sexual gratification. Given the typical difficulties men have with dependency, they are more likely to remain emotionally ambivalent than women, and to resist making commitments. Given their more relational, less autonomous sense of self, women are more likely to remain ambivalent about men as sexual objects--for men do not seem exclusive objects for women in the way that women seem exclusive objects for men.

These differences in emotional orientation are likely to produce strains in hetero-sexual relationships, since both men and

women tend to bring needs to the relationship that their partner is not prepared to provide for. Chodorow thinks that this sort of developmental imbalance weights more heavily upon women than men, since in her judgement men tend to be less aware of woman's emotional needs than women are of man's sexual needs.[3] While that may be true, it does not preclude the fact that the developmental patterns Chodorow analyzes impose sexual handicaps upon both men and women. If it seems clear that a strong relational orientation may serve as a 'feminine' handicap to pursuing one's sexual desires in an active fashion--wherever they might lead--it also seems clear that a strong object orientation may serve as a 'masculine' handicap to admitting emotional dependency, and thereby to expressing one's more passive feelings.

Chodorow's account of gender-derived differences in sexual development seems to support Moulton's view that human sexuality subsumes fundamentally different kinds of sexual behavior. That, however, is a conclusion that can be resisted. Given the psychological fact of bisexuality, the patterns Chodorow analyzes apply to children of both sexes, with boys experiencing 'feminine' patterns of develoment, and girls experiencing 'masculine' patterns of development. Chodorow suggests that the crucial gender-derived difference is a difference of "relational potential": boys are likely to be raised so as to fuse the issue of independence with that of 'masculinity', and girls are more likely to be raised so as to fuse the issue of interdependence, or "self-in-relation" with 'femininity'. But--again, given the psychological fact of bisexuality--it is likely that this difference in "potential" is one of relative weight, rather than one of kind. That would suggest that the issues of independence

and interdependence are important to children of both sexes, and that it is only in a statistical sense that independence is relatively more important to boys and interdependence relatively more important to girls.

Do differences in the socialization of gender indicate basic differences of sexual outlook--differences basic enough to warrant the claim that there are two kinds of human sexuality? It is undeniable that there are important gender differences--what is questionable is the extent to which such differences are determinative of sexual experience. From the standpoint of psychoanalysis, all persons share a mixture of the traits, inclinations, and weaknesses that are commonly associated with either one gender or the other. Given the idea that the child's invention of its gender is always somewhat difficult--if not traumatic--it is reasonable to suppose that one's gender is like a somewhat difficult decision one has made--a decision that is hedged in a defensive way, so that it seems in hindsight to be more certain and clearcut than is in fact the case. That one's decision is hedged in something like this way is argued for by the existence of bisexual fantasies which--according to Stoller--involve a measure of resentment toward the gender one has unconsciously negated. A similar point is made by Robert May,[4] who claims that the fantasy of what it would be like to be of the opposite sex is one that is irresistable for persons of both sexes. May suggests that in their unconscious fantasies women often imagine themselves as "greedy rapists", while men often imagine themselves as "tattered victims";[5] thereby reversing the gender characteristics they consciously assign, both to themselves and to each other. From the standpoint of unconscious

content, it seems clear that both men and women imagine themselves as bi-gendered beings, and that they do so to a greater extent than they are consciously able to allow.

Though the influence--both positive and negative--of the androgynous fantasy on human thought is no doubt considerable, it would be simplistic to allow a greater determinative weight to fantasy than to the divergent patterns of socialization that Chodorow details. Though the significance of gender differences may be somewhat ephemeral from an unconscious standpoint, it is not at all ephemeral from the standpoint of culture, and is in fact magnified--as Chodorow shows--under the social practice of maternal child-care. Perhaps it is best to view these factors--i.e., the fantasy of sameness and the social reality of gender difference--as co-determining influences upon mental life. What attention to the unconscious influence of androgyny does do is argue against reducing the domain of the sexual to socialization patterns per se. To make that argument is to ignore the somewhat recalcitrant way in which the unconscious can discount the influence of socialization upon human sexuality.

Section G: Conclusion

Chodorow shows that the practice of maternal child-care influences the typical patterns of socialization through which children become oriented to their gender, which in turn influences the way that men and women tend to associate their feelings with their sexual experience. Men tend to organize their sexuality around concerns of pride; women tend to organize their sexuality around concerns of caring. In time--and in particular if co-parenting becomes more

common--such gender-typed patterns of development may become far more consonant than is presently the case. Even under prevailing conditions, however, the difference in emotional orientation that Chodorow describes does not seem to warrant either the claim that there are two sorts of sexual desire or the claim that the phrase 'human sexuality' is by itself vacuous, requiring modification as to gender. Hence, despite the obvious biological differences, despite differing places or assignments in consciousness and unconsciousness, and despite differences in childrearing patterns within the nuclear family, the sexuality of man and woman is in important respects quite similar, enough so to suggest that sexual desire is far more like an equal opportunity experience than many feminists have allowed.

Chodorow's account addresses itself to the possibility of a social reform of parenting, such that the responsibility for parenting would be distributed more equally between mothers and fathers than is now the case. It seems likely that a change of this sort would have a moderating effect upon the child's perception of gender difference. With shared parenting, it would seem likely that boys would perceive their mothers as less mysterious and threatening, so that their movements toward independence from her would be less marked by defensiveness and fear--both of her and of 'femininity'--than is presently the case. It would also seem likely that girls would perceive their fathers as less like privileged outsiders, and less like privileged characters in general, so that their development would be less marked by the sense of an emotional barrier between "woman's place" and "man's world". Co-parenting would therefore seem likely to allow children to acquire a sense of their gender in a less defensive, less

rigid manner than is presently the case, and this--in turn--might reduce the degree to which hostility is implicated in the sexual attitudes that men and women form toward one another.

Whether co-parenting would lead to a sea-change in human sexuality is another question. Whether a co-parented family would--by providing a less exaggerated model of gender difference--make the process of sexual development less problematic is open to question. Given the prolonged period of childhood helplessness and dependency, and given the fact that even child psychologists are in considerable disagreement as to what constitutes 'adequate' parenting--parenting that is neither overly protective nor indifferent, neither too permissive nor too strict--it seems likely that the emotional process of child-parent separation would remain a difficult one. Given such conventions as toilet training and the incest taboo--both of which require children to curtail their erotic interest--it would seem likely that, even under the aegis of equal parenting, human sexual development will continue to bear the marks of a clash between the wishes of children and the expectations of adults. If that is the case, then it would seem that crucial sexual problems, such as the problem of fusing sexual desire with human interest and concern, are likely to remain with us, man and woman alike.

FOOTNOTES

Introduction

[1]Lazarus, cited in Tennov, Love and Limerance, Stein and Day, p. 284.

[2]Lasch, "Freud and Women", in the New York Review of Books, Vol. XXI, No. 14, Oct. 1974, p. 14.

[3]Nancy Chodorow, the Reproduction of Motherhood, U. Cal. Press, 1978, p. 166.

[4]Ibid., p. 196-97.

[5]Ibid., p. 169.

Section on Simone de Beauvoir

[1]Simone de Beauvoir, the Second Sex, Parshley trans., Bantam Books, 1961, p. xv.

[2]Ibid., p. 4.

[3]Ibid., p. 29.

[4]Ibid., p. 47.

[5]Ibid., p. 47.

[6]Ibid., p. 72.

[7]Ibid., p. 72.

[8]Ibid., p. 147.

[9]Ibid., p. 147.

[10]Ibid., p. 362.

[11]Ibid.,p. 614

Section on Juliet Mitchell

[1]Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Vintage Books, 1975, p. 93.

[2]Ibid., p. 17.

[3]Ibid., p. 51.

[4]Ibid., p. 614.

Section on Nancy Chodorow

[1]Nancy Chodorow, the Reproduction of Motherhood, U. Cal. Press, 1978, p. 169.

[2]Chodorow, p. 181.

[3]Ibid, p. 196.

[4]Robert May, Sex and Fantasy, Norton, 1980

[5]Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

Those who concentrate simply on affecting conscious values or material relationships are going to be sucked back into the assumptions of the established order if they are unable to take account of the unconscious...by the same standard, any effort that fancies it can accomplish liberation by analysis, or some other primary transformation of awareness, is equally hobbled, albeit on the other foot...By simply demonstrating an unconscious complex without any coordinated social critique, the individual is given no choice other than to go along with the cultural delusion which is civilization's classic response to its discontents.

Joel Kovel

"The Castration Complex Reconsidered"

Section A: Sexual Liberation Versus Sexual Repression

In Chapter Six we examine two approaches which tend to dominate political thinking about sexuality, the approaches that are associated with the political views of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx. Freud sees sexuality as an instinctual energy that must be bound, or repressed, to meet the requirements of civilization . For Freud we must each redirect our sexual energies in the course of development so as to generate our sociality, moral sentiment and fellow-feeling. Civilization involves sexual repression; without a certain degree of sexual repression, the amount of social cohesion required of civilization would not be possible. On Freud's view, civilization is itself an imperfect compromise between the psychological requirements of 'pleasure' and 'reality', and sexual discontent is as inescapable outwardly, or socially, as it is inwardly, or psychologically.

For Marx, sexuality is liberating, rather than repressive; sexuality is seen, not as a matter involving instinctual repression, but as something involving genuine social interaction, involving the attempt to relate to other human beings. Marx recognizes that persons suffer the conditions of capitalism, and that the alienation, artificiality, and impersonality sponsored by those conditions affect sexual expression. Nonetheless, Marx suggests that sexuality displays an essential character, which offers a liberating alternative to capitalist alienation. Sexuality is a social relation; in essence it is neither coercive nor impersonal. As such, sexuality offers the possibility of dismantling the artifice of the self that is created in capitalist society, and it provides a model for social relations

in communist society. If Freud sees sexuality as largely unconscious, as in large part a complex, internal disguise, Marx sees sexuality as essentially transparent and truthful; it is a way of connecting with other persons, a sign of giving a damn about each other as human beings.

Section B: Montesquieu's Persian Letters versus Alduous Huxley's Brave New World

Obviously the philosophical positions we have examined bear upon these different political lines of thought. The view that 'sexual desire' is nothing more than a carnal appetite, or merely a bodily phenomenon, is a view that is disparaging of the social aspects of sexuality. Shaffer's view--that 'sexual desire' is reducible to an attitude concerning genital satisfaction--would seem a case in point. Further afield, perhaps, are views which hold that 'sexual desire' is completely beyond the sphere of voluntary endeavor, since it is basically a phenomenon reducible either to an evolutionary program, encoded in the genes, or to a divine edict, which insures that the goal of human reproduction will be served. In speaking of the Christian duty of procreation, St. Augustine observed that "the members which were expressly created for this purpose will not obey the direction of the will...lust has to be waited for to set those members in motion, as if it had legal right over them".[1] If sexuality is an ungovernable human function, then the possibility of liberating sexual energy in such a way as to refashion the social order would appear to be ruled out.

On the other hand, some of the views we have explored allow

that sex may be a means for creating new and valuable sorts of social relationships. Nagel and Ruddick stress the idea that 'paradigm' sexuality involves the creation of mutual relations of self-discovery. On their view sexual experience offers the opportunity to dispense with ordinary subjective barriers, and to overcome the sort of stereotypical behavior that is associated with the acting out of gender roles. It is in this sense that Nagel and Ruddick suggest that 'paradigm' sexuality involves a morally valuable alternative to ordinary social relations.

The philosophical views we have examined may be divided into two categories: those which treat of sexuality as a particularly valuable kind of social relation, and those which treat of sexuality as an instinctual phenomenon that is either independent of, or even incompatible with the maintenance of valuable social relations. While some theorists--like Marx--emphasize the inherent value of sexuality, others--like Freud--emphasize the idea that many valuable social relations, like friendship and love, require the inhibition of sexual 'aims', and are achieved only at the expense of a certain degree of sexual fulfillment.

In general, it is difficult not to read the political literature concerning sexuality in light of the views of Marx and Freud, and to interpret sexuality as either a spontaneous social relation or as a somewhat dangerous sort of instinctual energy. As an example of the first view, it is useful to think of Montesquieu's Persian Letters. That work partly concerns itself with the disintegrating marriage between Uzbek, who is master of a Persian harem, and Roxanna, his rebellious wife. Their relationship disintegrates when Roxanna

admits that she has taken a lover, and deceived Uzbek. She declares that, in her indiscretion, she has proved herself freer than Uzbek has, in his absentminded devotion. She declares that by disrupting the "harmonious scheme" of the harem, she has acted in accordance with a natural law higher than the proprietary rules of the harem. By rejecting Uzbek, she has rejected the spurious, rather impersonal set of social relationships that are enforced by the eunuch guards, who are the enforcers of Uzbek's polygamous harem marriage. By acting in accordance with her heart, Roxanna has exposed the hypocrisy and repressiveness of the harem, and suggested, by her example, that sexuality is closely tied to the project of liberation. Roxanna's final letter to Uzbek conveys a tone of principled moral defiance: "How could you have thought...you had the right to thwart all my desires? No; I may have lived in servitude, but I have always been free".[2]

As Marshall Berman has interpreted this moment, Roxanna's sexual revolt epitomizes the principle of "authenticity".[3] By acting in accordance with her desires Roxanna has issued a liberal challenge to the tyrannical rule of the harem, which Berman characterizes as a "sado-masochistic garden of Eden". Roxanna has acted freely and authentically, and her sexuality has given her a degree of political leverage against the closed system of the harem. Though Roxanna's defiance has a moral dimension--since she acts in accordance with her desire, while others act in accordance with fear--it also has a political dimension, for it suggests a feminist challenge to the harem's patriarchal rule. Roxanna, like many contemporary feminists, has discovered in her sexuality a sense of her identity that provides

a basis for the realization of political power, and which offers her the emotional resources to oppose a social order that is manifestly oppressive.

As against this image of sexuality, which bears the impress of Enlightenment thought, it is useful to contrast the image of sexuality presented by Alduous Huxley in Brave New World. In that work, Huxley depicts a counter-utopia, a totalitarian regime which maintains itself partly by systematically gratifying the sexual desires of its inhabitants. If in the sweep of Enlightenment thought sexuality is the epitome of human freedom, within the contours of the New World sexuality is viewed in a more disquieting way, for the sexuality of the denizens of the New World epitomizes their slavery. Roxanna's sexuality expresses a moral stand or position, but the sexuality of the minions of the New World is the very denial of a moral stance. If in the Letters the expression of sexual desire is an expression of one's authentic freedom, in the New World the pursuit of sexual pleasure is seen as a goal compelling enough to lead persons to abjure their freedom, and willingly to accept conditions of slavery.

If the image of Roxanna suggests the political character of contemporary feminism, the image of the New World suggests the a-political, rather compliant character of a society that, like our own, seems to be characterized by a great interest in sex for its own sake, apart from any interest in maintaining sexual relationships. Some psychoanalytically oriented critics have thought that this sexual hedonism, or interest in sexual pleasure per se, signals a general redirection of awareness away from social concerns, and into the

subjective realm.[4]

Section C: Karl Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts versus Sigmund Freud's Civilization and its Discontents

The association between the project of sexual liberation and the creation of a political utopia is an enduring one; it is an association that has proved irresistable to numerous political theorists, among them Fourier and Marx. This may have something to do with the fact that human sexuality is so closely associated with the promise of creating, however temporarily, a strong sense of community--albeit a community in microcosm. At any rate, it is clear from the Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts that Marx thought there were inherent characteristics of sexuality that offered a model for social relations in communist society. In that work, Marx claimed:

> The immediate, natural, and necessary relation of human being to human being is also the relation of man to woman. 5

It seems clear that what Marx had in mind is that 'immediacy', 'naturalness', and 'necessity' are inherent characteristics of human sexuality, and that these are also characteristics that would pertain to all social relations, and not simply sexual relations, within a communist society.

Marx's view of sexuality appears quite optimistic in relation to Freud's. On Marx's view, the natural potential of sexuality is distorted by the social and economic conditions which prevail under capitalism. On Freud's view, 'civilized' sexual development requires the repression and distortion of human sexual potential. Marx emphasizes the idea that human sexuality suffers the contradictions inherent in

the objective conditions of capitalism; Freud emphasizes the idea that human sexuality suffers the internal conflicts that inhere in psychological development. Marx suggests that communist social relations may be modeled upon human sexuality; Freud suggests that 'civilization', whatever its economic contours, requires the repression of sexuality.

On Marx's view, sexuality is naturally social: as Schlomo Avineri has put it, sexuality is a capacity that is "other-directed" in character.[6] Freud's conception of sexuality highlights the influence of auto-erotic sexual aims, and suggests that the attachment of social sentiment to sexual aim is very often problematic. Marx conceives of sexuality as a direct relation between human beings. Freud shows how sexual relations are very often indirect relations: in their sexual desires, persons tend to pursue private fantasies of pleasure, fantasies which are partly the recapitulation of childhood wishes, rather than an expression of "natural" social concern.

The contrast between Marx's view of sexuality and Freud's view seems all but entire. Where Marx sees sexuality as a "natural" capacity, Freud finds a capacity in which what appears "natural" is comprised of elements no less naturally perverse, in which what appears as "necessary" derives from the contingencies of development, and in which what appears as "immediate" involves the distortion of both bodily impulse and social influence. Where Marx treats sexuality as a model for social liberation, and disregards the internal psychological barriers involved in sexual expression, Freud focusses almost exclusively on the internal barriers involved in sexual expression, and thinks that most of the things to which civilization attaches value are themselves incompatible with complete, non-repressive sexual

expression. Where Marx finds sexuality to involve a natural relation among human beings, Freud finds that civilization does not allow any such thing. Freud's rather gloomy judgment is not intended as an indictment of the contradictions of civilization, but as a claim about the limits of human potential, as is made clear in Civilization and its Discontents:

> As regards the social source of suffering..we cannot see why the regulations made by ourselves should not.. be a protection and a benefit for every one of us. And yet, when we consider how unsuccessful we have been in precisely this field of prevention of suffering, a suspicion dawns on us that here, too, a piece of unconquerable nature may lie behind--this time a piece of our own psychical constitution.7

If, as seems the case, Marx does not sufficiently direct his attention to the internal dynamics of sexuality, then it may also be said that Freud is relatively uncritical about the external conditions of the civilization he so stoically defends. Freud virtually assumes that the repressive socialization patterns of the nuclear family are a permanent fixture of civilization; he clearly assumes that such patterns require an absolute division, or polarization, of gender roles. Freud never seriously questioned the idea that 'normal' males must become providers, and 'normal' females must become nurturers. In not questioning this idea, Freud assumed there was a functional inevitability about 'normal' sexual development. The 'normal' outcome of development, as Freud sees it, culminates in the social superiority of males, and in the assumption of maternal tasks by females. In defense of his outlook, Freud offers numerous character judgments about gender, among them the judgment that women do not ordinarily develop a moral capacity commensurate to that of

men, and the judgment that the degree of contempt which men exhibit toward women is useful to society. Even if there were some statistical warrant for Freud's judgments, that would not sanction the necessity and inevitability he attributes to them. Despite Freud's insight into the complex, internal nature of sexuality, his insight into the social conditions he observed--in particular, into the polarization of gender that maintains the nuclear family--is quite questionable. As both Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein have argued, there is nothing that is inevitable--and little that is desirable--about the institution of maternal parenting.[8]

Marx and Freud offer critiques of civilization that complement one another. Freud does not concern himself sufficiently with the contingent character of social conditions, nor with the possibility of alternative socialization patterns. Marx does not concern himself sufficiently with the precariousness of human psychology, and in particular with the ambivalent character of sexual aims. If for Freud sex is largely an instinctual predicament, ensnarled in the repressive contours of civilization, for Marx sex is essentially a human relation that is deflected from its natural potential by the constraints of capitalism.

Section D: Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization versus Christopher Lasch's The Culture of Narcissism

The problem of developing a political critique of sexuality that does justice to the instinctual and unconscious, as well as the social and conscious determinants of sexuality is an ongoing one for political theorists. Among recent attempts to do so must be counted

Herbert Marcuse's Eros and Civilization and Christopher Lasch's Culture of Narcissism. Both of these works address the politics of sexuality in contemporary society, and they do so in ways that reflect the theoretical inspiration of Marx and Freud.

Marcuse criticizes contemporary society for the insistence and success with which it has restricted human sexual potential. Restrictive socialization has turned human sexuality into a version of economic "performance":

> In the 'normal' development, the individual...desires what he is supposed to desire; his gratifications are profitable to him and to others. His erotic performance is brought into line with his societal performance.[9]

Marcuse's thought suggests that contemporary sexuality is subordinate to economics. Capitalism, as a way of retaining its exploitative character, requires the "surplus" repression of sexual energy, which in turn requires the maintenance of sexual norms which insure the primacy of genital sexuality, and the maintenance of the nuclear family. The alternative, according to Marcuse, would be a society characterized by what Freud called "polymorphous perversity". In such a society the guilt and recrimination which devolve around genital sexuality, and which serve to maintain the institution of the nuclear family, would be diminished. This, in turn, would make it possible for sexual energies to be harnessed in a more direct and playful manner, in a manner that would allow for the "eroticization" of social relations.

Marcuse not only interprets present-day sexual restrictions in economic terms, as calling for a "performance"; he also suggests that the prospect of sexual liberation depends upon the degree of

economic progress civilization has achieved. Given present technological progress, the "need for renunciation and toil is greatly reduced", and thereby civilization can "afford a considerable release of instinctual energy".[10] In other words, Marcuse sees both the present predicament of regimented sexuality as well as the future prospect of liberated sexuality as economically determined states of affairs. Liberation is a possibility that is now historically "affordable".

In treating sexuality in economic terms, Marcuse appears to abandon Freud's insight into the unconscious determinants of sexuality. 'Sexuality'in Marcuse's sense is a matter of social and economic relations. Under present conditions, sexual relations are "repressive", but this "repressive" quality is a function of the high degree of sexual conformity required under capitalism. This is an argument that presupposes that 'sexuality' is a matter of social relations, and not a matter involving auto-eroticism and sexual fantasies and internal conflicts. For Marcuse's argument to work, it is necessary to show that 'sexuality' is actually reducible to the norms, values, and roles created in capitalist society, rather than an interpretation of these forms of demand that is subject to a wide range of individual distortion. By not showing this connection, it would seem that Marcuse has not sufficiently addressed the problem of internal barriers to sexual liberation, and that he has forsaken Freud for Marx.

Lasch provides a very different view of contemporary sexuality. If Marcuse treats sexuality as essentially an economic "performance", Lasch treats sexuality as essentially a matter of the unconscious influences that are exerted upon personality. Though all sexuality

involves narcissistic components, Lasch claims that the prevailing mode of sexuality is especially narcissistic, for it involves a degree of self-involvement that makes the achievement of passionate sexual relations highly unlikely. The 'narcissistic' character-type, which Lasch identifies as the prevailing contemporary character-type, is buffeted by internal sexual conflicts. Deeply interested in sensuality, the 'narcissist' is unable to experience genuine involvement with another person, and confuses momentary sexual arousal with enduring sexual passion. On Lasch's description, the 'narcissist' suffers the difficulty of childhood separation in a vengeful fashion: he or she is unable to accept the fact of social dependency without fear, and is unable to raise genuinely social feelings, other than rage.[11] If Marcuse depicts the sexually liberated society as a place where all relationships are eroticized by sexual energy, Lasch depicts existing society as a place where sexual energy is largely directed inward, onto the self, and where internal barriers to the full elaboration of sexual energy cast into doubt the very idea of a lasting sexual relationship. On Lasch's view, the prevailing plight is distinctly counter-utopian, and involves the widespread de-erotization of social relations.

Unlike Marcuse, Lasch does not construe the barriers placed upon sexual expression as reducible to the artifical requirements of capitalism. 'Sexuality' is seen, instead, as primarily an instinctual phenomenon. Lasch is relatively vague as to the social etiology of the 'narcissistic' character. Though Lasch suggests that the emotional isolation of the 'narcissist' has a great deal to do with the haphazard socialization patterns that result from the decline

of parental authority,[12] he also suggests that the prominence of the 'narcissist' is a predicament that has become socially endemic.

> The weakening of social ties, which originates in the prevailing state of social warfare, at the same time reflects a narcissistic defense against dependence. A warlike society tends to produce men and women who are at heart antisocial.[13]

To the extent that this latter conception represents Lasch's view, the etiology of the 'narcissist' is not reducible to changes in patterns of socialization or parental attitudes, but is instead a reflection of the increasing extent to which social relations and narcissistic instinctual trends have become proximate. Carried to its logical conclusion, Lasch's view of contemporary sexuality implies that social relations are ensnarled in a circular instinctual predicament, a Hobbesian "war of all against all" in which the possibility of harnessing sexual energies in the service of love and friendship grows increasingly remote.

On Lasch's conception, the crucial determinants of sexuality are unconscious, characterological determinants, which are rooted in the instincts. Given this conception, it is not surprising that Lasch downplays the significance of conscious determinants of sexuality, and minimizes the effects of the change in sexual attitudes and conventions that seems to be currently underway. Thus Lasch interprets the "woman's liberation movement" not as a platform for improving the quality of social relations, but as an ideological counter-challenge to the code of chivalry, the significance of which has been to release pent-up, unconscious hostility: "Denied illusions of comity, men and women find it more difficult than ever before to confront one another as friends and lovers, let alone as equals."[14]

For Lasch, the "sexual revolution" is itself a narcissistic phenomenon, since the attitudes associated with it reflect the 'narcissist's' interest in superficial sexual relationships.[15]

Lasch's view of contemporary sexuality contrasts sharply with Marcuse's view. Where Marcuse focusses primarily upon the conscious, potentially liberating aspects of sexuality, Lasch focusses upon the unconscious conflicts that raise emotional barriers to social liberation. Marcuse imagines a society in which social relations will become modeled on the wide-ranging sensuality and spontaneity that characterize the sexual awareness of children. Lasch finds that contemporary sexuality is already quite childlike--particularly in respect of its emotional character--and interprets this as suggesting a psychological barrier to liberation. If Marcuse offers a political critique of sexuality, it might be said that Lasch offers a sexual critique of politics.

Lasch and Marcuse complement one another as theorists of sexuality. Lasch pays relatively little attention to the way that human sexuality is subject to conscious influence, or to changes in the intellectual dimensions of social consciousness. Given his emphasis upon unconscious determinants, the fact that the 'woman's liberation movement' has made it possible for many men and women to discover the "chauvinism" of their sexual assumptions cannot be thought terribly important. Though Lasch does not examine the signficance of the 'gay liberation movement', presumably he would not find that the crucial point insisted upon by that movement--the acknowledgement of homosexuality--has had much impact upon sexual attitudes, except insofar as it is triggered unconscious defensiveness and hostility.

Yet, if Lasch minimizes the way that sexuality involves social awareness, Marcuse, given his project of reconciling Freud to Marx, minimizes the way in which sexuality involves internal conflicts. Neither theorist appears sufficiently attentive to the combination of conscious and unconscious determinants involved in sexual experience. This seems particularly so in relation to the view of 'sexual desire' that is implicit in their respective critiques.

For Marcuse, 'sexual desire' is a potential source of liberating energy that is constrained by the gender roles, as well as by the hetero-sexual norms, which serve the maintenance of late capitalism. It is only to the extent that such roles and norms predominate sexual motivation that it can be said that persons desire <u>just</u> "what they are supposed to desire". Yet it seems clear that sexual motivation is constituted in such a way that persons often, and perhaps characteristically, desire just what they are not "supposed" to. In the range of their sexual fantasies, persons often repudiate the norms they are expected to comply with, and embellish upon the roles they are supposed to play. The social norms and roles that one either learns or internalizes are no doubt categories of social awareness--but they are subject, in their mental registry, to a good deal of imaginative distortion. Marcuse's analysis does not allow a sense of the attraction of the 'forbidden' that is often involved in sexual desire.

Lasch suggests that the typical character type of contemporary culture is caught in a circular emotional predicament. The sexual energies of the 'narcissist' are liberated in relation to whatever restrictive sexual norms still remain, but these same energies are

psychologically turned inward, against the self, and withdrawn from social relations. The 'narcissist' suffers the inauthenticity of his or her sexual desire: "People nowadays complain of an inability to feel...they can no longer remember what it feels like to be inundated by desire." [16] This "inability" to feel, or to give emotional elaboration to sexual desire, does not, however, seem as impervious a barrier to sexual expression as Lasch suggests. On the contrary, it would appear that the sexual liberation movements have had some positive impact on sexual attitudes: the conventions regarding gender roles are being challenged, and significant numbers of persons appear to be creating alternatives to the traditional nuclear family. These changes, in turn, seem to have influenced the ways that persons allow themselves to express their sexual desires, and seem to have broadened, rather than narrowed, the range of sexual expression. Are these changes inauthentic? Though Lasch would not count a woman's dissatisfaction with the maternal role or a gay's decision to "come out of the closet" as indicative of anything other than a more fundamental erotic disappointment,[17] it may be argued that these are examples of a larger project of sexual--human--liberation that is currently underway.

To a considerable extent, it would seem that the views of Marcuse and Lasch recapitulate conceptual problems that arise in the critiques of civilization offered by Marx and Freud. As we have seen, Marx does not give sufficient attention to the way that the "other-directed" character of sexuality is challenged by the auto-erotic character of the sexual instincts. Despite Marcuse's attention to Freud, he--like Marx--depicts the process of sexual

development as an essentially social phenomenon, and thereby minimizes the ambivalent character of instinctual influence. For Marcuse, sexual development is a process in which "the private individual psyche becomes the more or less willing recipient of socially pleasurable and socially necessary aspirations, feelings, drives, and satisfactions".[18] By treating the essential aims of sexuality as social aims, Marcuse adopts a view which contrasts sharply with Freud's view of the development of sexual motivation. On Freud's view, individuals do not simply "receive", but challenge the images of social reality that are presented to them; they transform these images in light of the internal stimuli they experience. Freud traces the origins of sexual motivation to a compromise between instinctual and social demands, and suggests that this compromise is one that involves biologically regressive components, as well as socially adaptive ones. In contrast, Marcuse offers the image of individuals receiving their sexual aims from the society they inhabit--a view that dismisses Freud's insight into the conflict-ridden character of sexual motivation.

If it may be said that Marx does not direct sufficient attention to the instinctual aspects of sexuality, then it may also be said that Freud, in Civilization and its Discontents, pays insufficient attention to the contingent character of social conditions, against which individuals modify their sexual aims in the course of development. Patriarchy and the arrangement of families into nuclear groups are contingent conditions of civilization, but in Freud's mind these conditions are imbued with an intractable, instinctual character. Freud's psychological insight into the frustrating character of

sexuality is thereby transformed into an objective judgment about the necessity of civilized sexual discontent. Internal frustration becomes external discontent. Civilization itself is portrayed as a neurotic, emotionally troubled state of affairs. In this turn of thought, it seems that Freud has modeled civilization upon the psyche, while modeling its discontent upon internal conflict and frustration.

To the extent Freud draws this connection, his portrait of civilization is one that seems largely inspired by the internal imagery of civilization--i.e., by its ideology--rather than by attention to it's objective conditions. Given this ideological bias, Freud's political thought veers in the direction of instinctual determinism, in a way that is uncharacteristic of his psychological thought. Civilized sexuality emerges as an instinctual predicament, rather than as a developmental process involving social variables as well as instinctual ones. On Freud's psychological judgment, human sexuality involves a conflict between internal and external 'reality'. On Freud's political judgment, civilized sexuality is seen in relation to the internal 'reality' of repression, not in relation to the external 'reality' of repressive social conditions. This movement of Freud's thought manifests itself in his despair with political solutions, and in his reduction of political issues--such as the issue of private property and the issue of sexual freedom--to psychological generalizations about the intractable, aggressive character of human nature.[19]

Seen this way, Freud's sexual politics prefigures that of Lasch. Though Lasch decries the way that other critics have used the notion of 'narcissism' without attending to the social conditions

with which it is associated, on his own view 'narcissism' emerges as a metaphor for the loss of a sexual 'reality' that is primarily psychological. But this is surely a 'reality' of psychological imagery, as opposed to a 'reality' of social conditions. Lasch's sexual 'reality' is characterized by the positive polarization of gender roles, and by socialization patterns that derive from the traditional nuclear family. It is a 'reality' in which the chivalry of patriarchy keeps sexual hostility in check. This is a conception of sexual 'reality' that is no less ideological than Freud's; it is a view, like Freud's, which is thoroughly implicated in a defense of the sexual status quo.

Section E: Conclusions

If Lasch's analysis re-involves us with the limits of a Freudian perspective, Marcuse's analysis re-involves us with the limits of a Marxist perspective. Both theoretical alternatives involve questionable, near-absolute assumptions about human sexuality. Despite his insight into the complexity of sexual motivation, Freud assumes the inevitability of forms of sexual repression which maintain the nuclear family, and this assumption leads him to the brink of instinctual determinism. Despite his insight into the contingent historical character of social and familial relations, Marx assumes that the form of sexuality is naturally social and 'other-directed'.

Though these are questions which cannot be explored adequately here, it seems questionable whether human sexuality can be adequately approached from either theoretical perspective, taken alone. It

would seem that in our sexuality we are not simply involved in an instinctual predicament--as both Freud and Lasch suggest--for our predicament is one that we embellish upon, distort, and re-create through our sexual experience, which is itself shaped by the social conditions under which we live. In our sexuality, we are not simply or necessarily acting as social agents--as both Marx and Marcuse suggest--for we transform the roles we are expected to play and the norms we are expected to comply with in accordance with wishes that partly derive from our bodies. Hence it would appear that neither theoretical perspective captures the way that biological and social influences are combined--and sometimes confused--in sexual motivation. In our sexual desires we never quite become our bodies, though we do succeed in discarding some of the accoutrements of self--such as social roles--that we ordinarily carry with us. In our sexual desires we come close, perhaps closer than in our other desires, to dispensing with the often hostile, often defensive subjective barriers that ordinarily divide us. It is in this sense that our sexuality raises the possibility of a reinvention of social relations. Given the present acrimonious character of the commonweal, that is a theoretical prospect not to be taken lightly.

The failure of the critiques of sexuality we have examined is not entire, but it does suggest the need for more work upon a political theory of sexuality. To be even minimally adequate, such a theory would need to be able to encompass the feminist proposal for co-parenting. So long as the nurturant mode--the mode in which sexuality acquires its principal form--involves a gross disparity of gender, each child's introduction to his or her sexuality is

simultaneously an introduction into an unjust emotional pattern of development. As Nancy Chodorow has shown, the present mode of maternal parenting is one which celebrates the emotional independence of boys, while making this a difficult and suspect achievement for girls. Crucial as it is, it is difficult to entertain the proposal for co-parenting from either a Marxist or Freudian perspective, since a Marxist perspective is largely inattentive to emotional patterns of development, while a Freudian perspective treats those patterns as largely invariant.

What is needed, then, is more work upon a political theory of sexuality. Such a theory would combine the insights of Marx and Freud, without either degenerating into naive idealism or into uncompromising skepticism. It would be a theory of sexuality which took account of the material, as well as the instinctual determinants of sexuality, without attaching an exclusive weight to either set of determinants. Such a theory would be apprised of Freud's insistence on the need for some repression of sexuality, in raising humanity above a level of bestiality; at the same time, such a theory would be apprised of Marx's radical caveat--that the conditions under which civilization has been constituted are themselves not far removed from a level of bestiality. Such a theory would take account of the irrational aspects of human sexuality, while not discounting the possibility of sexual liberation. Such a theory would maintain a skeptical regard for the ambivalence manifest in the sexual instincts, yet it would allow for the possibility of a reinvention of human sexuality.

FOOTNOTES

[1]St. Augustine, De Nuptiis et Concupiscentia, cited by Robert Deane, The Political and Social Ideas of St. Augustine, Columbia, 1955, p. 55.

[2]Montesquieu, The Persian Letters, trans. C. J. Betts, Penguin, p. 280.

[3]Marshall Berman, The Politics of Authenticity, Atheneum, p. 20.

[4]Richard Sennett, The Fall of Public Man, Vintage, 1978.

[5]Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts, cited by Schlomo Avineri, The Social and Political Thought of Karl Marx, Cambridge Univ. Press, 1971, p. 89.

[6]Ibid., p. 89.

[7]Sigmund Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, trans. James Strachey, Norton, p. 33.

[8]Cf. Nancy Chodorow, The Reproduction of Motherhood, U. of Calif. Press, 1978, and Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Monotaur, Harper, 1977.

[9]Herbert Marcuse, Eros and Civilization, Vintage, 1962, p. 42.

[10]Ibid., p. 81.

[11]Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, Norton, 1978, p. 33.

[12]Ibid., p. 178.

[13]Ibid., p. 51.

[14]Ibid., p. 190.

[15]Ibid., p. 193.

[16]Ibid., p. 13.

[17]Ibid., p. 197

[18] *Eros and Civilization*, p. viii

[19] *Civilization and its Discontents*, pp. 60-61.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Summary and Conclusion

In Chapter One we examined the attempts of analytic philosophers to clarify the meaning of sexual desire. For the most part, the views we examined treat 'sexual desire' as a behavioral phenomenon, or else as a form of instrumental motive, like the desire for communication. We criticized these accounts for their neglect of the influence of fantasy upon sexual behavior as well as for their neglect of the way that sexual motivation is subject to unconscious influence.

In Chapter Two we examined the views of two contemporary moralists as to the inherent value of sexual experience. Both Nagel and Ruddick emphasize the fact that 'sexual desire' may involve genuine sharing, but in so doing they minimize the role of sexual fantasy in sexual experience, and in fact specifically exclude sexual fantasy from their conception of 'paradigm' sex. No doubt it would be "better" in some sense if sexual relations were direct and immediate, rather than mediated by fantasy, but that does not seem the case. There would appear to be a tendency in moral commentary to overstate the social, other-regarding aspects of sexual experience, at the expense of its more private aspects. As Juliet Mitchell has observed, "Despite Freud's work the temptation is still to see sexuality as interpersonal sexual relationships, and sexual phantasies or auto-eroticism as perverse".[1]

In Chapter Three we examined the phenomenological approach to

sexual desire taken by Hegel and Sartre. Both Hegel and Sartre treat 'sexual desire' as a conscious phenomenon, and pay relatively little attention to the instinctual aspects of sexuality. In assimilating 'sexual desire' to a philosophical tradition in which the 'rational' is 'real', Hegel and Sartre treat 'sexual desire' as a desire for domination. Though their view seems suggestive of sado-masochistic sexual experience, it is not a view that seems sufficient for ordinary sexual experience, and may tell more about human aggression than about human sexuality.

In Chapter Four we examined a number of psychoanalytic views of 'sexual desire', each of which emphasized the emotional conflicts that are often involved in sexual experience. 'Sexual desire' is interpreted by psychoanalysts to involve conflicts of impulses, as well as conflicts between auto-erotic feelings and feelings of 'object attachment'. The psychoanalytic view suggests that 'sexual desire' involves an internal compromise of aim, that it involves the distortion of ordinary social expectations and norms as well as of biological capacity, and that it becomes mentally available through pleasurable fantasies that are largely in the subjunctive mood--fantasies as to what one would like to do or to have happen, rather than actually do or make happen.

In Chapter Five we examined a number of feminist views as to woman's sexuality, each of which stresses fundamental differences in the sexuality of men and women. As against these views, we emphasized the fact of psychological bisexuality, as well as the similarity of certain developmental problems faced by boys and girls, in particular the problem of reconciling sensual and affectionate

psychological aims. In addition, we argued that sexual desire is an experience in which persons imaginatively dismantle their gender roles, at least as often as they act them out. For these reasons, we claimed that the fact of gender is a less crucial determinant of human sexual experience than most feminist positions tend to indicate.

In Chapter Six we examined the sense in which sexuality is a political phenomenon, giving particular attention to Marcuse's view of the politically liberated society as modeled upon infantile sexuality and to Lasch's view of existing society as in retreat from politics, owing to the increasingly prominent role of the narcissistic character-type. We criticized Marcuse for having underplayed the sexual significance of the unconscious, and we criticized Lasch for having underplayed the sexual significance of changes in social awareness. We claimed that the deficiency of both Marcuse's and Lasch's critique of sexuality argues for the creation of a political theory of sexuality that will reconcile the insights of Freud and Marx, a theory that will do justice to the way that human sexuality is informed by both unconscious and conscious determinants.

The problem raised in the Introduction is that of offering a paradigm of 'sexual desire'. In the arguments we have presented, we have tried to show the difficulties involved in defining 'sexual desire' in terms of its behavioral specifications, and in terms of its moral qualities. We have challenged the attempt to give a sufficient account of 'sexual desire' as a phenomenological project of consciousness; we have investigated some of the difficulties involved in maintaining that 'sexual desire' is either repressive or liberating

when viewed as a political phenomenon.

Part of the problem involved in defining 'sexual desire' stems from the ambiguity of the term, 'sexual desire'. On one hand, sexual desire, like other human desires, is subject to a degree of voluntary control. Persons exercise a degree of freedom in choosing how they will express their sexual desires, with whom, and when. On the other hand, sexual desire differs from many other desires in that it is a bodily desire, in that it involves components that are often lost to awareness, or difficult to acknowledge, and in that it typically involves childhood orientational feelings, feelings which may be quite disorienting in the light of adult reality. Persons tend to choose the ways they express their sexual desires, but they do not choose the impulses and feelings involved in the elaboration of their sexual desires, which are to some extent impervious to voluntary control.

Of many attempts to capture the essence of sexual motivation, Freud's view seems especially powerful. Freud suggests that sexual desire has its emotional origins in the child's compromise of the instinctual demand for bodily pleasure that it feels with the requirements of socialization that it faces. According to Freud, children socialize themselves: they enlist sexual energy so as to be able to delay the gratification they desire. In drawing this compromise, the psychological weight assigned to the reduction of bodily tension--in accordance with the "pleasure principle"--is partly superceded by the weight assigned to the maintenance of bodily tension--in accordance with the "reality principle". In this fashion infantile wish is partly--but not entirely--assimilated to "realistic" desire. The

movement toward "realistic" assimilation is partial, because the compromise between "pleasure" and "reality"involves unconscious maneuvering. In obedience to the "pleasure principle", certain requirements of "reality" are psychically distorted; in obedience to the "reality principle", part of the instinctual demand for "pleasure" is psychically repressed. The nature of sexual motivation is such that it can neither be described as a straightforward adaptation to external "reality", oppressive or not, nor can it be described as a straightforward expression of the bodily demand for "pleasure".

On Freud's view the existence of this compromise, and the unconscious maneuvering it involves, are crucial to sexual motivation. The experience of sexual desire reflects the nature of this compromise, which is made available in sexual fantasies, as well as in the guilt and revulsion that persons tend to feel toward certain aspects of sexual experience. Seen this way, 'sexual desire' cannot be thought an ordinary adult desire, but at the same time it cannot be thought a mere facsimile of an infantile wish. 'Sexual desire' is a phenomenon that bears the stamp of both conscious and unconscious thought; it is a phenomenon subject to both social and instinctual determinants. Psychically, 'sexual desire' occurs at a point of focus--a point sometimes apparent in sexual fantasy--where unconscious wish impacts upon the conscious perception of reality, at the boundary between unconsciousness and consciousness.

Freud's view of sexual motivation suggests some of the problems involved in the other lines of definition we have investigated. While there is no denying that 'sexual desire' is in some sense a bodily desire,it is not simply that. 'Sexual desire' is not simply

a bodily drive for genital satisfaction, since it is a "drive" against and through which persons exercise their imagination. 'Sexual desire' is not simply a bodily need for pleasure, since the claim that 'sexual desire' is only <u>that</u> denies the nature of the compromise of bodily erotic potential--as well as the uneasiness about bodily sexual functions--that is ordinarily involved in sexual development.

In addition, there is no denying that 'sexual desire' is in some sense a social desire, in that it typically involves interpersonal feelings, and in that it is typically manifest in the desire for sexual intercourse. But to insist that 'sexual desire' is necessarily social--i.e., to make this a matter of definition--is to overlook the emotional significance of narcissistic and auto-erotic feelings, which appear to play a role in all sexual experience. Given the weight of narcissistic feeling, sexual desire may manifest itself as a form of heightened attention to one's own state of being, rather than as a desire to enter into a sexual relation with another person. If the guilt-ridden character of sexuality weighs against classifying 'sexual desire' as hedonistic bodily desire, the ambivalent character of sexuality weighs against classifying 'sexual desire' as a genuine social desire.

In addition, it cannot be denied that 'sexual desire' is in some sense an instrumental desire--i.e., a desire that persons use to fulfill their other desires. Both the "Playboy man" and the "Cosmopolitan woman" are alike, for example,in that both use their sexual desires as an instrument of social mobility. Persons may use sex for leverage in climbing the ladder of success. But the fact that sexual desire is sometimes used this way should not be taken to

suggest that 'sexual desire' is necessarily intelligible--i.e., that it is a desire of which we can expect persons to be able to say what it is they want and how they propose to get it. More so than other desires, sexual desire is often accompanied by feelings and aims that are difficult to become aware of, much less to articulate.

In addition, there is no denying the fact that 'sexual desire' is a particularly emotional desire, in that it typically involves the recapitulation of powerful orientational feelings. But many persons appear to be able to divert such feelings, and sometimes to express them in non-sexual ways. Hence it appears gratuitous to insist that 'sexual desire' is necessarily accompanied by powerful emotion, and precarious to suggest that 'sexual desire' necessarily involves feelings of social concern or even individual pride, although this no doubt is typically the case. Again, given the example of narcissistic sexuality, it appears that significant numbers of persons experience barriers to the expression of strong feeling, barriers which limit their ability to make a full commitment to their sexual desires.

Psychoanalytic thought offers abundant testimony as to the richness and variety of human sexual desire, but it does so at the expense of offering an explanation of sexuality that is neat or tidy. While it is true that 'sexual desire' must involve a desire to gain bodily pleasure, psychoanalytic thought makes it clear that 'sexual desire' is not just that, since the idea of 'gaining bodily pleasure' involves a compromise of bodily potential, and since the aim of 'gaining pleasure' involves a compromise of conscious intention. The paradigm element of 'sexual desire' does not seem to be

either a bodily drive or a mental design, the singular intention of which is to gain pleasure. Rather, it would seem that the paradigm element of 'sexual desire' has to do with fantasies of pleasure, fantasies in which both (sometimes repressed) bodily impulses and (sometimes distorted) conscious intentions are involved. So construed, 'sexual desire' is a desire more subjunctive than other desires. It is a desire geared toward what one would like to do or have happen rather than toward what one is actually going to do, in a behavioral sense, or actually capable of, in a biological sense.

Given the role of fantasy in the formation of sexual desire, it is possible for persons to attach sexual feelings to desires that are in no obvious way sexual--such as the desire for political power or religious salvation. It is also possible for persons to detach their sexual feelings from such obviously sexual desires as the desire for sexual intercourse; the degree of emotional detachment with which the narcissist experiences sexual desire would appear to constitute a case in point. These difficulties suggest the problem involved in giving behavioral specifications for 'sexual desire', and suggest as well that the connection between 'sexual desire' and actual sexual experience may be quite remote. Those who would account for 'sexual desire' as a behavioral phenomenon would be well advised to allow for the ambivalent and indirect ways in which 'sexual desire' achieves bodily and social expression.

This ambivalent, often unrealistic character of sexuality is a feature of the phenomenon that is not conspicuous in the work of behaviorists and phenomenologists. Mere attention to bodily behavior is insufficient since bodily activity is often an incomplete ex-

pression of sexual intention. The "flesh", as Dorothy Dinnerstein has put it, "is both vehicle and saboteur of human wishes".[2] It is also misleading to treat 'sexual desire' as a conscious motive, as phenomenologists suggest, since the intentions most crucial to 'sexual desire' may be lost to awareness, or displaced from the objects upon which they were originally directed. In important ways, 'sexual desire' is a phenomenon that meets neither the eye of the behaviorist nor the ear of the phenomenologist.

If 'sexual desire' does not fit the categories in which philosophers have put it, it also seems the case that its moral and political significance are often distorted. Thus, the moralists we have examined dramatize the adult, socially responsible aspects of sexuality, while overlooking its childlike, more purely egoistic aspects. The crucial political views of sexuality--which derive from Freud and Marx--also seem one-sided in their emphasis. For Freud, sexuality is involved with the precariousness of civilization and of social relations. For Marx, sexuality is the very model of social liberation. But Freud tends to overemphasize the sense in which sex is implicated in all the various shortcomings of civilization, and Marx tends to minimize the internal conflicts that seem all but inherent in human sexuality. Accepting Freud's description of sexual motivation does not require us to accept his judgments as to the place of sex in society. Accepting Marx's view that sex provides a measure of social liberation does not require us to accept Marx's description of sexuality as an 'immediate, natural, and necessary' relation.

Neither Freud's nor Marx's political view of sex seems to capture the ambivalent focus of human sexuality. The force of sexual

desire is a force which pulls us closely toward other persons while often turning us violently away from them. The feelings associated with sexual desire may be powerful and assertive feelings. Sexual desire may signal intense social involvement, and sexual energies may serve to create unique bonds of consciousness as well as communal spirit. But if that is true, it is also true that sexual feelings may become channeled in defensive ways; that sexual desire may signal a departure from worldly concern; and that sexual energies may be unleashed in projects of dissolution and nihilism that are all but entire.

Given the ambivalent character of sexual desire, it is easier to understand why it is a phenomenon many would scan for signs of hope or else for confirmation of despair, and why its moral and political significance may easily be misjudged. Sexual desire is a phenomenon that seems as undeserving of Freud's exaggerated pessimism as it is of the exaggerated optimism that characterized a period of culture just past--a period in which the expressiveness and exuberance of sexual desire seemed to herald the possibility of liberation.

FOOTNOTES

[1]Juliet Mitchell, Psychoanalysis and Feminism, Vintage Books, 1975, p. 23.

[2]Dorothy Dinnerstein, The Mermaid and the Minotaur, Harper Books, 1976, p. 124.

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