

University of Nevada, Reno

**Being and Freedom:  
Ahmed, Beauvoir and Irigaray on Subjectivity, Lack and Liberation**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and the Honors Program

by

Tanner L. Lyon

Dr. Deborah Achtenberg, Thesis Advisor

May 8, 2019

**UNIVERSITY  
OF NEVADA  
RENO**

**THE HONORS PROGRAM**

We recommend that the thesis  
prepared under our supervision by

**Tanner L. Lyon**

Entitled

**Being and Freedom:  
Ahmed, Beauvoir and Irigaray on Subjectivity, Lack and Liberation**

be accepted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**BACHELOR OF ARTS, Philosophy**

---

Deborah Achtenberg, Ph.D., Thesis Advisor

---

Erin Edgington, Ph. D., Director, **Honors Program**

May 8, 2019

## Abstract

In this essay I will explore the concept of lack and its presence in the thought of Simone de Beauvoir, Luce Irigaray and Sara Ahmed. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Ethics of Ambiguity* establishes an ethical system based on the existentialist idea that every individual must make themselves a "lack of being" because they have no essence and are fundamentally free. Luce Irigaray's *This Sex Which Is Not One* explores the inherent multiplicity and lack within the female body. Opposing popular psychoanalytical conceptions, Irigaray asserts that the female body is unfamiliar because it lacks male features and has both multiple features and a lack in their place simultaneously. Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology* utilizes phenomenological thought to analyze the way that an individual understands familiar and unfamiliar objects. Ahmed characterizes phenomenology thusly: "... [P]henomenology for Husserl means apprehending the object as if it were unfamiliar, so that we can attend to the flow of perception itself."<sup>1</sup> Essentially, phenomenology observes the unfamiliarity of familiar objects. My analysis will begin with a phenomenology of the lack that Irigaray attributes to the female body in *This Sex Which Is Not One*. Then, I will explain Ahmed's concept of wonder as remembering the lack of unfamiliarity in familiar objects, actions or individuals. Finally, I will conclude with de Beauvoir's argument that one has a responsibility to make themselves a "lack of being," meaning that they must recognize their lack of an essence and embrace their movement toward freedom.

---

<sup>1</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 37.

**Acknowledgements**

I would first like to thank Dr. Deborah Achtenberg for her continued support throughout my time at the University of Nevada; thank you for helping me to actualize my dreams and being there for me day and night. I extend my deepest thanks to Dr. Scott Mensing, Rossmery Diaz-Preciado and KaPreace Young for granting me the HURA to complete my research. I would like to acknowledge the Heather Williams and Dr. Karla Hernandez for reviewing early drafts of the essay. Of course, I would like to thank the honors program and Dr. Erin Edgington for allowing me to demonstrate the culmination of my intellectual capabilities.

**Table of Contents**

Abstract.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iii
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Orientation(s), Disappearance and Wonder.....	1
3. The Logic of Truth and Being-as-Lack.....	7
4. Becoming-Free.....	19
5. Conclusion.....	33
6. Bibliography.....	35

## Introduction

The ambiguous concept of lack is integral to the phenomenon understood as “being.” In this project, I use phenomenology and Marxian theory to analyze the concept of lack and its relation to the subject, the other and freedom. First, I utilize Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* to establish a Marxian and phenomenological foundation. Second, I use Ahmed’s concept of wonder to explore the subjective function of lack in Luce Irigaray’s *This Sex Which is Not One*. Finally, I utilize Simone de Beauvoir’s *The Ethics of Ambiguity* to discuss the relationship between subjective lack and liberation.

## Orientation(s), Disappearance and Wonder

In his famous work *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, the founder of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl, describes the concept of a “phenomenological bracketing.” In a critique of Descartes and his mode of radical doubt, Husserl identifies bracketing as a concept in Cartesian discourse,

*We extract only the phenomenon of “bracketing” or “disconnecting,” which is obviously not limited to that of the attempt to doubt, although it can be detached from it with special ease, but can appear in other contexts also, and with no less ease independently. In relation to every thesis and wholly uncoerced we can use this peculiar εποχή [epoche], a certain refraining from judgement which is compatible with the unshaken and unshakable because self-evidencing conviction of Truth.<sup>1</sup>*

The act of bracketing, or disconnecting a phenomenon from its context, is a concept that

---

<sup>1</sup> Edmund Husserl, *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology* (Eastford: Martino Fine Books, 2017), 109.

Husserl appropriates from Descartes to establish his theory of phenomenology. By suspending judgement, one can perceive an object as a truly unfamiliar object. Descartes utilizes bracketing to discern that which he cannot doubt, but Husserl suggests that the concept can be utilized to understand objects in their unique singularity. Bracketing avoids reducing the object to traditional epistemological categories, which do not capture the object's singularity. A recent phenomenologist, Sara Ahmed, revives Husserl's ideas to arrive at a new iteration of phenomenology.

Ahmed characterizes the phenomenological movement in the following passage: “phenomenology for Husserl means apprehending the object as if it were unfamiliar, so that we can attend to the flow of perception itself. What this flow of perception shows is the partiality of absence as well as presence: what we do not see (such as the back of side of the object) is hidden from view and can only be intended.”<sup>2</sup> The goal of phenomenology is to understand the partiality of perception and how perception is supplemented with intentionality. One cannot perceive a totality, so it must be assumed that the objects of perception are whole. Each part refers to a whole, but the whole can only be perceived as parts. Ahmed continues, “The partiality of perception is not only about what is not in view (say, the front and the back of the object), but also what is ‘around’ it, which we can describe as the background. The figure ‘figures’ insofar as the background both is and is not in view.”<sup>3</sup> The background of perception is partially perceived and unperceived. In order to perceive an object amidst other objects, the other objects must provide a context for the object of perception, or a background. The

---

<sup>2</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 37.

<sup>3</sup> Ahmed, 37.

background is perceived as the edge or outline of the foreground, making the background peripherally perceived.

Ahmed argues that Husserl finds the background interconnected with the familiar. She states, “Husserl’s approach to the background as what is ‘unseen’ in its ‘thereness’ or ‘familiarity’ is extremely useful, even if he puts the familiar to one side. It allows us to consider how the familiar takes shape by being unnoticed.”<sup>4</sup> The familiar relates to the background in two ways: first, the familiar fades into the background because it goes unnoticed, unlike objects in the foreground. Second, the familiar is also in the foreground as an object of repeated exposure. The flow of perception tends to adhere to unfamiliar objects; as one continues to perceive unfamiliar objects, they eventually become familiar and go unnoticed. Phenomenological inquiry would continue to notice the familiar object so that the process of becoming-familiar can be disclosed. Ahmed suggests that “wonder” encapsulates this process of (re)analyzing familiar objects.

Ahmed defines wonder as follows: “To wonder is to remember the forgetting and to see the repetition of form as the ‘taking form’ of the familiar.”<sup>5</sup> Familiar things that are partially perceived in the background are essentially “forgotten.” When one perceives an unfamiliar object, it becomes the center of the foreground. As one repeatedly perceives the unfamiliar object, the object becomes familiar. When an object is familiar, the history of that object is forgotten. Wondering, then, is to remember the object’s history when perceiving the familiar and to perceive subsequent repetitions of the familiar as a becoming-familiar. Essentially, wonder relocates the familiar from the periphery to the

---

<sup>4</sup> Ahmed, 37.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed, 82.

center.

By wondering, one should remember the history of the familiar: “To re-encounter objects as strange things is hence not to lose sight of their history but to refuse to make them history by losing sight. Such wonder directed at the objects that we face, as well as those that are behind us, does not involve bracketing out the familiar, but rather allows the familiar to dance again with life.”<sup>6</sup> The histories of familiar things fade into the background with the becoming-familiar of the thing. Wonder should allow the history of the familiar to be analyzed in the foreground; wonder endows familiar objects with the “life” developed throughout their history. This does not mean detaching the familiar from its context, but rather understanding the history of the context. The history of the object’s life was the center of Karl Marx’s concept of “commodity fetishism.”

In his magnum opus, *Capital*, Marx states that labor is metaphysically expressed in the market as a value: “The equality of the kinds of human labour takes on a physical form in the equal objectivity of the products of labour as values.”<sup>7</sup> The amount of labor that was put into a thing is reflected in its value. Something that took little labor to create would have less value than something that took more labor to create. Ascribing value to physical objects gives them metaphysical or “objective” qualities that change their state. Marx argues that commodities participate in a life of social relations, rather than the laborers that produced the commodities, in a phenomenon termed “commodity fetishism.” He writes,

---

<sup>6</sup> Ahmed, 164.

<sup>7</sup> Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One* (London: Penguin Books, 1990), 164.

The mysterious character of the commodity-form consists therefore simply in the fact that the commodity reflects the social characteristics of [wo]men's own labour as objective characteristics of the products of labor themselves, as the socio-natural properties of these things. Hence it also reflects the social relation of the producers to the sum total of labour as a social relation between objects, a relation which exists apart from and outside the producers.<sup>8</sup>

When the worker attempts to perceive the product of her labor, she instead perceives the "objective value" as the value of her labor. These "social" relations are defined by the relation of values between commodities. Thus, the relation between one laborer's work and another's is expressed through the relation between their commodities' value. This social relation defines commodity fetishism as a form of "reification."

By perceiving a commodity and remembering the historical role of the laborer, the Marxist is "wondering." Ahmed asserts, "A reconciliation of Husserlian phenomenology and a Marxist critique of the reification of objects might be possible through wonder: a wonder at how things appear is what allows histories to come alive."<sup>9</sup> Wonder reveals that commodities "come alive" when they steal the life of the laborer. When the product of one's labor becomes a commodity, the life of the laborer is coopted by the value of the commodity. The values of commodities interrelate as if they were alive themselves, while perception of the worker fades into the background. The history of commodities, then, is a history of disappearance, or lack.

In the reification of commodities, the history of the labor that produced the

---

<sup>8</sup> Marx, 164-165.

<sup>9</sup> Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 200.

commodity is lost. Ahmed writes, “Insofar as Marxism emphasizes the disappearance of labor in commodity fetishism, then it too provides a model of history as disappearance. A queer phenomenology, in which phenomenology is in dialogue with psychoanalysis and Marxism, might ‘go behind the back’ to account for what disappears in how things disappear.”<sup>10</sup> Using wonder to “go behind the back” of commodities reveals that labor disappears from the history of commodities. The history of labor disappears when the metaphysical qualities of value are bestowed upon the product of labor. Value is labor-as-lack.

Identifying lack is a phenomenological endeavor. As Ahmed writes, “This is how phenomenology offers a queer angle - by bringing objects to life in their ‘loss’ of place, in the failure of gathering to keep things in their place.”<sup>11</sup> By bracketing objects, the phenomenologist is demonstrating why objects have lost their place in the plane of fore/back/ground by suspending them in their unfamiliarity. Ahmed also states that “objects that are gathered as gatherings of history... are in a certain way overlooked.”<sup>12</sup> In apprehending the object as if it were unfamiliar, the “gatherings of history” remain perceived with the object, since wonder rejoins the object with its history. Ahmed argues that the act of wondering is a form of “disorientation.”

Ahmed defines disorientation as follows: “Disorientation can be a bodily feeling of losing one’s place, and an effect of the loss of a place”<sup>13</sup> When an object is unfamiliar

---

<sup>10</sup> Ahmed, 190.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmed, 165.

<sup>12</sup> Ahmed, 163.

<sup>13</sup> Ahmed, 160.

in a familiar context, the flow of perception adheres to the unfamiliar. The act of perception is an attempt to familiarize the unfamiliar, “orienting” the perceiver and giving the perceiver a “place” where the object’s unfamiliarity will be absolved of its history to become-familiar. Wondering, however, prevents this process of orientation, disorienting the perceiver so that the object and its history may continue to be perceived in its unfamiliarity and difference. As Ahmed proclaims, “Moments of disorientation are vital.”<sup>14</sup>

### **The Logic of Truth and Being-as-Lack**

Everyday discourse upholds a certain orientation; this orientation is usually that of the male perspective. For example, in the English language, the default pronouns are typically he/him/his. The academy has advocated for a shift toward a more inclusive “his/her” default, but this does not stop most academics from assuming the orientation of a male. The entirety of the social order, it seems, is interpreted from a male orientation by default. Why is woman out of place in the subject position? Is woman an unfamiliar other? In her critique of psychoanalysis, Luce Irigaray asserts that woman is reified as an object and excluded from assuming the role of subject due to the dominance of “the logic of truth.”

The masculine interpretation of sexuality denies the possibility of a feminine theory of sexuality. Irigaray asserts,

Psychoanalytic discourse on female sexuality is the discourse of truth. A discourse that tells the truth about the logic of truth: namely that *the feminine*

---

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, 157.

*occurs only within models and laws devised by male subjects.* Which implies that there are not really two sexes, but only one. A single practice and representation of the sexual [...] This model, a phallic one, shares the values promulgated by patriarchal society and culture, values inscribed in the philosophical corpus: property, production, order, form, unity, visibility... and erection.<sup>15</sup>

Psychoanalytic theory, as “the discourse of truth,” maintains that the feminine can only be represented through phallogocentric discourse because woman’s physical and mental differences ultimately escape this discourse. In fact, woman cannot reflect this logic because her sex is not “one,” unlike the phallus. The consequences of such a reduction are that the feminine is understood through concepts that reflect patriarchal society rather than as the subject of analysis, e.g., property, production, order, etc. This results in regarding the feminine as an extension, or a perversion, of the masculine. Psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan expresses this sentiment in his analysis of the sexualization of the female body.

The sexualization of the female body is a “necessary” result of the existence of a sexualized other in the discourse of truth. Lacan states, “The sexed being of these not-whole women does not involve the body but what results from a logical exigency in speech. Indeed, logic, the coherence inscribed in the fact that language exists and that it is outside the bodies that are moved by it – in short, the Other who is incarnated, so to speak, as a sexed being – requires this one-by-one.”<sup>16</sup> Logic requires that the sexual *be*

---

<sup>15</sup> Luce Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One* (Ithica: Cornell University Press, 1985), 86.

<sup>16</sup> Jacques Lacan, *Encore, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998), 10.

something. Woman is sexualized because the logic of truth will necessarily impose sexuality upon the body of the other, who is, in this singular logic, woman. Woman becomes the primary materialization of the sexual. Her body does not contain ontological qualities of the sexual, but it is unfamiliar and out-of-place in relation to the body of the subject. Although the logic of truth was produced by male bodies, sexualization exists on a metaphysical plane that transcends the material. This sexualization becomes incarnate by being ascribed to each female body as they themselves become incarnate. Irigaray analyzes Lacan's statement as follows: "Female sexualization is thus the effect of a logical requirement, of the existence of a language that is transcendent with respect to bodies, which would necessitate, in order—nevertheless – to become incarnate, 'so to speak,' taking women one by one. Take that to mean that woman does not exist, but that language exists."<sup>17</sup> The discourse of truth transcends materiality; it is unaffected by the physical world and is represented materially by the subject. Since the logic of truth is metaphysical and prior to the formation of the body, the body of the other is less ontologically present than the language of the logic of truth, which is why Lacan refers to women as "not-whole" women: women are outside of the logic of truth, or the "whole." The other indeed has a role in the logic of truth, but not as a present subject.

As males hold the subject position in the logic of truth, woman is ultimately subordinate to man in the phallographic order. Irigaray asserts, "Moreover, it is inasmuch as she does not exist that she sustains the desire of these 'speaking beings' that are called men... Man seeks her out, since he has inscribed her in discourse, but as lack, as fault or

---

<sup>17</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 89.

flaw.”<sup>18</sup> The unfamiliar other holds a central position as one who can provide the familiar subject with that which he cannot provide himself. Thus, man includes woman in his logic as the representation of the sexual. Man does not ascribe subjectivity to the object of sexuality, however, because she must remain subordinate to the male subject in the discourse of truth. The out-of-place other lacks subjectivity because she cannot exist as both subject and object in a logic that upholds males as the only subject that has being. Woman has a place in this logic, but as a lack of being. Wondering about the subject has revealed that the history of the unfamiliar other has disappeared in the discourse of truth. The next task of wonder is to determine why woman is a lack in the logic of truth.

Marxian theory can provide a framework for wondering about the unfamiliar’s delegation to the status of an object in the discourse of truth. Irigaray states,

Marx’s analysis of commodities as the elementary form of capitalist wealth can thus be understood as an interpretation of the status of woman in so-called patriarchal societies. The organization of such societies, and the operation of the symbolic system on which this organization is based – a symbolic system whose instrument and representative is the proper name: the name of the father, the name of God – contain in a nuclear form the developments that Marx defines as the characteristic of a capitalist regime: the submission of “nature” to a “labor” on the part of men who thus constitute “nature” as a use value and exchange value; the division of labor among private producer-owners who exchange their woman-commodities among themselves, but also among producers and exploiters or

---

<sup>18</sup> Irigaray, 89.

exploitees of the social order; the standardization of women according to proper names that determine their equivalencies; a tendency to accumulate wealth, that is, a tendency for the representatives of the most “proper” names – the leaders – to capitalize more women than the others.<sup>19</sup>

The capitalist regime, the system of truth established in the name of the big Other (or “the leaders”), commodifies nature, which includes the natural body, by ascribing use and exchange values to it. In the act of commodification, labor is expected to utilize objects with use value, thus reducing the body to an instrument and a commodity. Women, unfortunately, do not have a subject role in this social organization, as previously established; instead, women are exchanged according to the “proper name” ascribed to them. Material and symbolic power in the logic of truth is produced from the dehumanization and commodification of women.

In a famous declaration from his explanation of commodity fetishism, Marx notes that commodities are not mere physical objects. He notes, “A commodity appears at first sight an extremely obvious, trivial thing. But its analysis brings out that it is a very strange thing, abounding in metaphysical subtleties and theological niceties.”<sup>20</sup>

Commodities can be physical, but their metaphysical qualities are essential to their existence as commodities. By affixing an object with value, whether use or exchange, an object is endowed with metaphysical qualities that give it a symbolic presence in the logic of truth, which is materialized in the capitalist economy.

The metaphysics of commodities is particularly relevant in the commodification

---

<sup>19</sup> Irigaray, 172-3.

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Capital: Vol. 1*, 163.

of life. On the one hand, woman has a natural body that connects her to physical experience. On the other, woman has two values that effectively split her identity into a multiplicity: “As commodities, women are thus two things at once: utilitarian objects and bearers of value.”<sup>21</sup> Women are both latent carriers of value that can be exchanged for commodities of similar value, as well as an object that can be consumed as an instrument – woman is simultaneously capital and an instrument for the maintenance of the system of truth. As Dinesh Wadiwel notes, the presence of a use and, later, an exchange value effectively secures woman’s status as a commodity in the discourse of truth.<sup>22</sup> Even further, “A commodity – a woman – is divided into two irreconcilable ‘bodies:’ her ‘natural’ body and her socially valued, exchangeable body, which is a particularly mimetic expression of masculine values.”<sup>23</sup> Not only does the commodity itself have two dimensions, but also the natural as commodity. Exchange and use values are not reducible to natural bodies – natural bodies are *a priori*, while the metaphysical realm of the system of truth relies on the imposition of metaphysical qualities upon a natural body. Once the natural body is sacrificed for the establishment of the system of truth, the metaphysical dimension of commodities can form social relations amongst themselves; this is what defines commodity fetishism. It is by exchanging, “circulating” women that the logic of truth is established.

The circulation of women allows for the production of the very social order that

---

<sup>21</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 175.

<sup>22</sup> Dinesh Wadiwel, “‘Like One Who is Bringing his Own Hide to Market:’ Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification,” *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 21, no. 2 (2016): 65.

<sup>23</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 180.

excludes them from its discourse. As Irigaray writes, “The circulation of women among men is what establishes the operations of society, at least of patriarchal society.”<sup>24</sup> The symbolic categorization of women as object is a result from the operations of patriarchal society, insofar as the circulation of women established this society in the first place. It is thus a logical necessity that woman become an object, just as it is a logical necessity that she became sexualized in Lacan’s discourse of truth. In a critique of Claude Levi-Strauss, Irigaray wonders about the reification of woman as object of circulation:

Why exchange women? Because they are “scarce (commodities) ... essential to the life of the group,” the anthropologist [Levi-Strauss] tells us. Why this characteristic of scarcity, given the biological equilibrium between male and female births? Because the “deep polygamous tendency, which exists among all men, always makes the number of available women seem insufficient. Let us add that, even if there were as many women as men, these women would not all be equally desirable ... and that, by definition ..., the most desirable women must form a minority.”<sup>25</sup>

Women are an object of circulation because man’s polygamist desire is transferred to his desire of the possession of women. Since some women are more desirable (sexualized) than others, further metaphysical qualities relating to the categorization of sexualization are symbolically imposed upon woman. Women in general are “essential to the life of the group,” which generates the desire to accumulate them in the first place; of course, this desire will be pursued according to the hierarchy of sexualization.

---

<sup>24</sup> Irigaray, 184.

<sup>25</sup> Irigaray, 170.

Women are not exchanged as women, but as commodities. Irigaray asserts, “The use made of women is thus of less value than their appropriation one by one. And their usefulness is not what counts the most.”<sup>26</sup> The logic of capitalist accumulation has an intimate interconnection with the Lacanian logic of truth, which also takes women “one-by-one.” This is not to suggest that women are circulated and exchanged as women, however, because “when women are exchanged, woman’s body must be treated as an *abstraction* ... It is thus not as ‘women’ that they are exchanged, but as women reduced to some common feature ...”<sup>27</sup> and later, “*Women thus has value only in that she can be exchanged.*”<sup>28</sup> Although it is woman’s sexual scarcity that makes her the object of circulation in the first place, it is not a sexualized woman that is circulated, but merely a commodity with exchange value. Here the physical-to-metaphysical leap is made evident, with the fetishism of commodities occurring under the watchful eye of the big Other. The symbolic power of the big Other’s proper name develops in tandem with his accumulation of these commodities. By accumulating the most sexualized of women, the big Other is able to hoard the means of socio-cultural production. At the same time, “Ownership and property are doubtless quite foreign to the feminine.”<sup>29</sup> This discrepancy can be attributed to woman’s ability to /re/produce material, labor and culture.

Due to their contribution to society, women do not engage in the economy of accumulation. Irigaray writes, “*A fortiori*: why are men not objects of exchange among

---

<sup>26</sup> Irigaray, 174.

<sup>27</sup> Irigaray, 175.

<sup>28</sup> Irigaray, 176.

<sup>29</sup> Irigaray, 31.

women? It is because women's bodies – through their use, consumption, and circulation – provide for the condition making social life and culture possible, although they remain an unknown 'infrastructure' of the elaboration of that social life and culture."<sup>30</sup> The bodies of women are used, consumed and circulated to establish society and culture. Although woman is fundamental to this mode of production, she is not recognized as an autonomous subject; in fact, she is not recognized at all. Women are reduced to "infrastructure," because, although they were responsible for the production of the society, they are excluded from participation in it. In this way, women are a base of lack that allows for the production of a superstructure. Woman is thus exploited two-fold: once as a commodity and again as a laborer with a natural body.

Women carry the capacity to labor, to be exchanged and to /re/produce further sources of wealth accumulation. Due to these facts, "All the social regimes of 'History' are based upon the exploitation of one "class" of producers, namely, women, whose reproductive use value (reproductive of children and of the labor force) and whose constitution as exchange value underwrite the symbolic order as such, without any compensation in kind going to them for that 'work.'"<sup>31</sup> By merit of her ability to /re/produce the labor force, which is her use value, woman allows for the establishment of the social in general. When woman is commodified and circulated as the object of sexualization and exploitation, her exchange value becomes the basis of culture. Although woman's labor is the very basis of civilization, her contribution remains unrecognized and uncompensated. Woman, then, is the original object of exploitation, as

---

<sup>30</sup> Irigaray, 171.

<sup>31</sup> Irigaray, 173.

Irigaray stated when introducing Marx. Man, as a result, is merely attempting to establish socio-economic relations with himself, securing woman's status as commodified lack in the male economy.

The transition from the natural order to the symbolic order is established in a male-dominated economy. Irigaray writes,

The production of women, signs, and commodities is always referred back to men (when a man buys a girl, he "pays" the father or the brother, not the mother ...), and they always pass from one man to another [...] Which means that the possibility of our social life, of our culture, depends upon a ho(m)mo-sexual monopoly? The law that orders our society is the exclusive valorization of men's needs/desires, of exchanges among men. What the anthropologist calls the passage from nature to culture thus amounts to the institution of the reign of ho(m)mo-sexuality.<sup>32</sup>

By circulating women, men are simply establishing homosexual relations with other men. In the act of accumulating sexualized commodities, men exchange in order to experience the relations of other men. The logic of truth is based in the satisfaction of man's desire *by* other men *via* women-as-commodities. The value of man's proper name is reflected in the commodities that he accumulates: "*Commodities, women, are a mirror of value of and for man.*"<sup>33</sup> The sexual economy is a reflection of male desire for other men and a means to establish a relation between them; women are merely an instrument for establishing this relationship. Woman-as-accumulated-commodity is a reflection of the

---

<sup>32</sup> Irigaray, 171.

<sup>33</sup> Irigaray, 177.

power of man's "proper name," his symbolic identity.

An equivalent of the homosexual economy does not exist among woman, thus being an *homme-o-sexual* (ho[m]o-sexual)<sup>34</sup> economy. A pseudo-homosexuality among women is possible in the logic of truth, but only under specific circumstances: "And yet female homosexuality does exist. But it is recognized only to the extent that it is *prostituted to man's fantasies*. Commodities can only enter into relationships under the watchful eyes of their 'guardians.'"<sup>35</sup> In accordance with Marx's theory of commodity fetishism, the woman-as-commodity has social relations with other women-as-commodities. These social relations, however, are only established in order to satisfy man's desire, thus adhering to the logic of truth. Women cannot relate to other woman *as* women, but only as a representative of the proper name that they are under the ownership of. This reduces woman's relationship with woman to the same ho(m)mo-sexual economy that denies her natural relations in the first place.

Establishing a feminine sexual economy in which men are exchanged does not negate woman's exploitation. Irigaray is not advocating to invert the existing logic by upholding woman as a subject and man as an object. As she writes,

The issue is not one of elaborating a new theory of which woman would be the *subject* or the *object*, but of jamming the theoretical machinery itself, of suspending its pretension to the production of a truth and of a meaning that are excessively univocal... rather, repeating/interpreting the way in which, within discourse, the feminine finds itself defined as lack, deficiency, or as imitation and

---

<sup>34</sup> Luce Irigaray, *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un* (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977), 168.

<sup>35</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 196.

negative image of the subject, [woman] should signify that with respect to this logic a *disruptive excess* is possible on the feminine side.<sup>36</sup>

Inverting the so-called logic of truth would merely uphold the phallogocentric capitalist regime and its values. Instead, this production of truth must be abolished by eliminating both the subject's and the object's priority of discourse. The freedom of all, subject and object, must be willed regardless. Though the other-as-commodity only exists as a lack within the logic of truth, she is still capable of affecting language's metaphysical plane and disrupting its theoretical production. Thus, lack is capable of affecting presence as a "disruptive excess" by revealing the extensive object history of exploitation within the logic of truth and subverting the concepts that exchange relies upon. In this, the definitive duality of subject and object is threatened.

The ascription of subject/object relations is threatened by disrupting the production of truth. Irigaray declares, "One is never separable from the other. You/I: we are always several at once. And how could one dominate the other? Impose her voice, her tone, her meaning? One cannot be distinguished from the other, which does not mean that they are indistinct."<sup>37</sup> The self and the other are falsely opposed; subject and object are inseparable concepts. One cannot be subordinate to the other because they are each necessary for, and interconnected with, the other, as demonstrated by woman's /re/production of culture and the social in general. Interconnection does not rid each of its existence as a unique singularity, however. Difference is maintained while the dichotomy is abolished. Lack, then, is a quality of presence itself.

---

<sup>36</sup> Irigaray, 78.

<sup>37</sup> Irigaray, 209.

Opposing concepts outside of the discourse of truth are not separated by a void. As Irigaray argues, “Our depth is the thickness of our body, our all touching itself. Where top and bottom, inside and outside, in front and behind, above and below are not separated, remote, out of touch. Our all intermingled. Without breaks or gaps.”<sup>38</sup> Opposing concepts are constantly interconnected by the nature of their existence. Concepts are absolutely present with one another; lack is “touching” presence and vice versa. Though the other is unfamiliar and distinct from the subject, the subject requires the other for its own lack-as-presence.

### **Becoming-Free**

Being a lack of presence frees the individual from the constraints of the logic of truth. In order to be truly free, however, others’ freedom must also be affirmed. Since the subject and object are one and the same, the actions of the individual directly interfere with the actions of others. This relation can be antagonistic, as in the case of oppression, or it can be one of mutual aid, as in the case of liberation. For the individual to truly pursue liberation, she must will the liberation of the other. Susan Hekman notes that this multifaceted theory of liberation is a result of Beauvoir’s rethinking of “western” philosophy in light of the lack of female orientations.<sup>39</sup> With her unique ideas regarding liberation, Simone de Beauvoir associates lack with freedom.

Similarly to Irigaray, Beauvoir asserts that the individual is a lack of being. She characterizes the lack of being as follows:

---

<sup>38</sup> Irigaray, 213.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Hekman. “Simone de Beauvoir and the Beginnings of the Feminine Subject,” *Feminist Theory* 16, no. 2 (2015): 138.

There is an original type of attachment to being which is not the relationship “wanting to be” but rather “wanting to disclose being.” Now, here there is not failure, but rather success. This end, which [wo]man proposes to [her]self by making [her]self a lack of being, is, in effect, realized by [her] [...] This means that [wo]man, in [her] vain attempt to *be* God, makes [her]self exist as [wo]man”<sup>40</sup>

Humans do not desire to be, as they are already engaged in the process of being; instead, one desires to know the contents of her being, or to “disclose” being. The determinist may argue that being unable to perceive the contents of one’s being is a failure of the individual, but Beauvoir argues otherwise: since the disclosure of being is realized by the individual, the individual ultimately has the power to direct the process of disclosure, as opposed to leaving the question of being to a transcendent, metaphysical structure. The individual directs the process of the disclosure of her being by attempting to achieve an unattainable end, such as becoming God. Ultimately, for Beauvoir, freedom is the ability to direct the process of the disclosure of being.

For one’s freedom to be valid, the disclosure of being must return to the question of freedom. Beauvoir writes, “Freedom must project itself toward its own reality through a content whose value it establishes. An end is valid only by a return to the freedom which established it and which willed itself through this end [...] It is not necessary for the subject to seek to be, but it must desire that there *be* being.”<sup>41</sup> The lack of being establishes the value of the end that she herself establishes. Unlike the concept of value

---

<sup>40</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 2015), 11.

<sup>41</sup> Beauvoir, 75.

that Marx critiques, the value of one's end does not cause the individual's history of labor to disappear; instead, by directing the process of the disclosure of being, the lack of being has complete control over the ascription of value and the disclosure of history, which keeps the individual unalienated from her labor. The value of one's end is only valid, however, if her freedom is affirmed in a way that allows the process to return to affirmed freedom. For this to occur, one must will that there be being.

In order to will one's own being, one must also will the being of others. Beauvoir states, "To will that there be being is also to will that there be men by and for whom the world is endowed with human significations. One can reveal the world only on a basis revealed by other men. No project can be defined except by its interference with other projects. To make being 'be' is to communicate with others by means of being."<sup>42</sup> Humans are thrown into a world amongst other humans. Since the individual's project is inherently interconnected with the projects of others, to will the disclosure of one's being is also to will the disclosure of the other's being. As one desires her own disclosure, so too does she desire the disclosure of all beings. Beauvoir argues that this is universal, which includes the individuals that deny the freedom of others.

For one to become free, all must become free. As Beauvoir asserts, "... every [wo]man needs the freedom of other [wo]men and, in a sense, always wants it, even though [s]he may be a tyrant; the only thing [s]he fails to do is to assume honestly the consequences of such a wish. Only the freedom of others keeps each one of us from hardening in the absurdity of facticity."<sup>43</sup> Without freedom, one cannot *become* and will

---

<sup>42</sup> Beauvoir, 76.

<sup>43</sup> Beauvoir, 77.

only *be*. Not only does the individual need the other's freedom to become free herself, but she also actively desires the other's freedom. If one does not will the freedom of the other, her being will be reduced to pure facticity, or a static history. In other words, one's being will be reified and will cease to be a project-in-progress. Though one's facticity heavily influences the trajectory of the disclosure of one's being, one's freedom defines the process of the disclosure of being. Fatalist readings of history, however, reduce the individual's inherent lack to the inevitable disclosure of a factic History.

Beauvoir argues that deterministic conceptions of history reduce the lack of the individual to the fatal movement of the *Zeitgeist*, thus stripping the individual of her inherent freedom in favor of an all-encapsulating facticity. She asserts that

in Marxism, if it is true that the goal and the meaning of action are defined by human wills, these wills do not appear as free. They are the reflection of objective conditions by which the situation of the class or the people under consideration is defined. In the present moment of the development of capitalism, the proletariat can not help wanting its elimination as a class. Subjectivity is re-absorbed into the objectivity of the given world. Revolt, need, hope, rejection, and desire are only the resultants of external forces<sup>44</sup>

Individuals are thrown into "objective" conditions that they will have to navigate with their will. If the will is simply a reflection of these objective conditions, however, then the individual's lack is nothing more than the result of "external forces." In this sense, the proletariat only desires their liberation because they were thrown into the situation of the

---

<sup>44</sup> Beauvoir, 19.

proletariat, not because the nature of lack is to affirm its freedom in the disclosure of being. If this is the case, then the spontaneous and revolutionary action of revolting against the oppressors amounts to nothing more than the actualization of history.

If a given response to objective conditions is absolutely necessary, then the totality of existence is simply the experience of an inevitable facticity. Fatalist conceptions of history result in the negation of lack:

if only one way shows itself to be possible, if the unrolling of history is fatal, there is no longer any place for the anguish of choice, or for regret, or for outrage; revolt can no longer surge up in any heart. This is what makes historical materialism so reassuring a doctrine; the troublesome idea of a subjective caprice or an objective chance is thereby eliminated. The thought and the voice of the directors merely reflect the fatal exigences of History.<sup>45</sup>

Freedom-as-lack and its related anxiety are irrelevant for a deterministic history. If the endpoint of one's existence is predetermined, then no legitimate choice is possible; one will always choose that which History intended her to choose. Moreover, there would be no reason to show disdain for the historical and present order of things, for that is how existence was intended to develop. Beauvoir argues that Historical Materialism adopted this logic: if all of history was to inevitably result in a pre-determined end, then forcibly bringing about a revolution is unnecessary, because it will happen if it was supposed to. In this conception of the universe, the directors, the big Other, is just a spokesman for history, or even history incarnate. If history is not fatal, then mistakes, chance, freedom

---

<sup>45</sup> Beauvoir, 117-8.

and lack are all relevant to the individual's process of the disclosure of their being.

Determinism is a rather strong philosophical position to hold, but it appears as though the determinists themselves are not committed to a fatalistic reading of history. Beauvoir explains "we have seen that, despite the requirements of his system, even Hegel does not dare delude himself with the idea of a stationary future; he admits that, mind being restlessness, the struggle will never cease. Marx did not consider the coming socialist state as an absolute result, but as the end of a pre-history on the basis of which real history begins."<sup>46</sup> For Hegel, the spirit of the individual is not a static being, but an active, "restless" force. Marx claimed that the end of capitalism would result in the transition to communism, but his "determinism" is incomplete, because his account of true history is missing; Marx made no clear assertions about the history that results from the liberation of all individuals and was only commenting on a pre-history defined by class conflict. Beauvoir says later that, "The communists themselves admit that it is subjectively possible for them to be mistaken despite the strict dialectic of History."<sup>47</sup> Although Beauvoir identified historical materialism as a reassuring doctrine on account of a fatalistic interpretation of history, it would seem as though the dialecticians themselves are not committed to a deterministic conception of history.

Although Hegelian and Marxian dialectics are often interpreted as fatalistic narratives of history, Beauvoir explains that the movement of the dialectic is indeterminate and antithetical to a totalizing facticity:

One is here playing, with utter dishonesty, on two opposite conceptions of the

---

<sup>46</sup> Beauvoir, 127.

<sup>47</sup> Beauvoir, 133.

idea of necessity: one synthetic, and the other analytic; one dialectic, the other deterministic. The first makes History appear as an intelligible becoming within which the particularity of contingent accidents is reabsorbed; the dialectical sequence of the moments is possible only if there is within each moment an indetermination of the particular elements taken one by one. If, on the contrary, one grants the strict determinism of each causal series, one ends in a contingent and disordered vision of the ensemble, the conjunction of the series being brought about by chance. Therefore, a Marxist must recognize that none of [her] particular decisions involves the revolution in its totality.<sup>48</sup>

In this passage, Beauvoir reveals that dialectics are diametrically opposed to determinism. This “analytic” determinism relies on a fractured perception of history, in which each causal series relies on the series prior, though this fractured whole is painted as a fixed facticity. On the other hand, “synthetic” dialectics affirm the lack inherent in all individuals, since indeterminant moments occur one by one, thus actualizing a multiplicity of possible causal series. If indeterminate moments and particular individuals compose history, non-teleological dialectics are more capable of analyzing the becoming of history – a project that could materialize through making history the object of wonder. Within this multiplicity, the individual can affirm her lack; however, one must understand that her will for freedom does not fully will the liberation of all people. A revolution is dependent on the actualization of multiple wills for freedom, a unity of lack actualizing freedom.

---

<sup>48</sup> Beauvoir, 159.

Beauvoir's theory of freedom affirms Marx's dialectic of liberation, at the expense of Hegelian absolutism. Beauvoir contrasts her project with Hegel's as follows: "For [Hegel] particularity appears only as a moment of the totality in which it must surpass itself. Whereas for existentialism, it is not impersonal universal [wo]man who is the source of values, but the plurality of concrete, particular [wo]men projecting themselves toward their ends on the basis of situations whose particularity is as radical and as irreducible as subjectivity itself.<sup>49</sup> In the Hegelian dialectic, particularity develops in the abstract moment, which is negated in the dialectical moment, which is then sublated to form the new abstract moment. Since particularity only occurs as a single moment of a totalizing facticity, the individual is denied her lack. For Hegel, particulars are not particulars, but merely parts of a whole. In Beauvoir's existentialist/phenomenological form of dialectics, the individual is a particular in an indeterminant moment. It is the particularity and the lack of the individual that allows future moments to be disclosed. History is thus composed of individuals actualizing their freedom in light of the particular situation that they were thrown into.

Each individual is attempting to actualize their freedom amidst the situation that they were thrown into, but some use their lack to deny the freedom of others. This will to oppress is the essence of evil:

There are cases where a man positively wants evil, that is, the enslavement of other men, and he must then be fought. It also happens that, without harming anyone, he flees from his own freedom, seeking passionately and alone to attain

---

<sup>49</sup> Beauvoir, 17.

the being which constantly eludes him.... violence is justified only if it opens concrete possibilities to the freedom which I am trying to save.<sup>50</sup>

The oppressor is an individual that utilizes her freedom to enslave others. By affirming one's lack in this manner, however, she is effectively denying their own freedom, since freedom requires willing the freedom of all individuals. The oppressor is a lonesome individual, attempting to achieve freedom in a context that is inherently void of freedom. The oppressor that denies the freedom of others is a threat to freedom itself, so the oppressor must be destroyed. In this instance, since the oppressor is antithetical to the affirmation of freedom and the disclosure of being, it is appropriate to use violence to will the freedom of others.

The oppressor desires her own freedom, of course, but she does not understand that this also demands the freedom of the other. Beauvoir describes the mode of oppression as follows:

The trick of tyrants is to enclose a [wo]man in the immanence of [her] facticity and to try to forget that [wo]man is always, as Heidegger puts it, 'infinitely more than what [s]he would be if [s]he were reduced to being what [sh]e is; '[wo]man is a being of the distances, a movement toward a future, a project. The tyrant asserts [her]self as a transcendence; [s]he considers others as pure immanences...<sup>51</sup>

Oppression functions by convincing the oppressed that their being is only composed of a facticity. Essentially, the oppressor reduces the subject to an out-of-place other. Freedom

---

<sup>50</sup> Beauvoir, 147-8.

<sup>51</sup> Beauvoir, 110.

disappears into history itself. If the individual's project has infinite potential, then her project has no more value than another's infinitely variable project. The oppressor denies the ambiguity of one's freedom and asserts her own project as the singular adherent to the logic of truth, reducing others to factic supplements to this project. The oppressor convinces others of this farce by degrading their being.

As the enemy of the lack inherent in all individuals, the oppressor must be stopped. The oppressor values facticity over freedom:

However, by virtue of the fact that the oppressors refuse to co-operate in the affirmation of freedom, they embody, in the eyes of all men of good will, the absurdity of facticity; by calling for the triumph of freedom over facticity, ethics also demands that they be suppressed; and since their subjectivity, by definition, escapes our control, it will be possible to act only on their objective presence; others will here have to be treated like things, with violence; the sad fact of the separation of [wo]men will thereby be confirmed.<sup>52</sup>

By championing facticity over freedom, the oppressor embodies "the absurdity of facticity:" an individual aimlessly attempting to achieve freedom by denying it to others, effectively seeking freedom by affirming sheer facticity. Freedom is more immediate to the individual than facticity, but one must simultaneously recognize her own facticity so that she can disclose her being in such a way that acknowledges the object history that is hidden by familiarity. The oppressor cannot be upheld as a particular subjectivity. She is merely an absurdity of facticity, something of an object, or an objective presence. The

---

<sup>52</sup> Beauvoir, 104.

unfortunate consequence of this fact is that the oppressor is not a lack-of-being, but a thing that endangers the actualization of freedom. By reducing the oppressor to an object, the unity of individuals is eliminated, contradicting Irigaray's revelation that the subject/object, self/other distinction was a false dichotomy; however, the unity of individuals is not possible alongside an active oppressive force. As such, this object must be destroyed as other obstacles to freedom are destroyed; through violent revolution. This also requires, unfortunately, that those who aid the oppressor be destroyed as well, although it is the oppressor that doomed those that service her to the absurdity of facticity: "We are obliged to destroy not only the oppressor but also those who serve [her], whether they do so out of ignorance or out of constraint."<sup>53</sup> Anyone that is a threat to the freedom of all individuals must be eliminated, whether or not they have a will to enslave others.

Beings are inherently entitled to their freedom. Oppressors force the individual to reject this fact by convincing the individual that she is lesser than a being: "... the disgust which the victims felt in regard to themselves stifled the voice of revolt and justified the executioners in their own eyes. All oppressive regimes become stronger through the degradation of the oppressed."<sup>54</sup> Oppressors build power by establishing themselves as the only individuals worthy of the rights of being. If individuals regard themselves as less-than-being, then they will not feel entitled to the freedom that their being entails. This phenomenon can be noted in the discourse of truth: the male oppressors attempt to degrade woman by declaring her to be a lack. Thus, by framing one's facticity as the

---

<sup>53</sup> Beauvoir, 106.

<sup>54</sup> Beauvoir, 109.

totality of her being, the individual will deny her freedom in favor of the individual that she regards as a transcendent being; however, the oppressed can affirm their freedom by revolting against those that deny the other's freedom.

If one does not fall into her facticity, as the oppressor desires, she can reaffirm her freedom through revolt. Beauvoir declares, "The oppressed has only one solution: to deny the harmony of that [wo]mankind from which an attempt is made to exclude [her], to prove that [s]he is a [wo]man and that [s]he is free by revolting against the tyrants."<sup>55</sup> Oppressive regimes can only function if the oppressed passively accept the oppressors' assertion that they are transcendent. If the oppressed deny this, then the oppressor's sovereignty will be threatened; the symbolic prison of facticity will open to reveal infinite possibilities of being. Since the oppressed cannot affirm their freedom as desired without intervention from the oppressor, the only possible course of action is to will the liberation of all, including the oppressors themselves, by affirming one's own freedom in the form of rebellion. This movement toward liberation requires other oppressed individuals to deny immanent facticity in order to embrace their own freedom, even if this entails risking their own life.

In the will for liberation, some individuals lose their life, even if they are not liberators or oppressors themselves. The big Other attempts to make this fact a secret, falsely guaranteeing freedom by way of enclosing others in their facticity: "And we have seen that every struggle obliges us to sacrifice people whom our victory does not concern ... [Those who govern] try to mask the crime from themselves; at least they try to conceal

---

<sup>55</sup> Beauvoir, 89.

it from the notice of those who submit to their law. If they cannot totally deny it, they attempt to justify it.”<sup>56</sup> It is inevitable that some individuals will be lost in the will to liberate all people. The big Other denies this fact to themselves first and foremost. If they cannot deny the fact to themselves, they deny it to those that find solace under the big Other’s symbolic order. If denial fails, the big Other attempts to justify the losses first to herself. If the factic nature of the sacrifice of individuals is obvious to the oppressor, then she will attempt to justify the losses to those that may compose the losses themselves.

The subjects of Stalin’s USSR are a material example of denying loss in the face of facticity. This is the case because the facticity of the Stalinist USSR became the aim of the will itself, rather than the liberation of all people. Beauvoir writes, “The triumph of Russia is proposed as a means of liberating the international proletariat; but has it not become an absolute end for all Stalinists? The end justifies the means only if it remains present, if it is completely disclosed in the course of the present enterprise.”<sup>57</sup> The ultimate failure of Stalin was that he no longer willed that there be being, instead treating being as if it were already disclosed and not in a perpetual process of disclosure. Stalin did not will the liberation of all people, but instead attempted to maintain the factic symbolic order. In this way, Stalin is not a Marxist; he believed that his dialectics encompassed the totality of the revolution, rather than being a particular will for liberation amidst others fighting for the same end. To affirm one’s lack of being and to will the liberation of all individuals, her project must be an absolute end that one perpetually works toward.

---

<sup>56</sup> Beauvoir, 117.

<sup>57</sup> Beauvoir, 135.

Projects that will the liberation of all individuals are absolute goals that cannot be achieved in one lifetime. Beauvoir asserts that, “When one fights for the emancipation of oppressed natives, or the socialist revolution, [s]he is obviously aiming at a long range goal; and [s]he is still aiming at it concretely, beyond [her] own death, through the movement, the league, the institutions, or the party that he has helped set up.”<sup>58</sup> True liberation can only be achieved if one develops concrete goals toward a distant end. This does not mean that one fruitlessly aims at a utopian future; the lack-of-being is demanded by ethics to make definitive movements toward this goal of liberation. As such, the lack-of-being effectively encourages others to will the liberation of all individuals. The only way to ensure that a means does not turn into an end-in-itself, as it did for Stalin, is to direct freedom at itself. The phenomenological Marxist, the lack of being must establish a project of absolute freedom to make liberation possible at all.

To become liberated, the individual must comprehend her own freedom in addition to her facticity. If one has fallen into the oppressor’s logic, Beauvoir suggests making her freedom apparent: “What must be done is to furnish the ignorant slave with the means of transcending [her] situation by means of revolt, to put an end to [her] ignorance [...] All that an external action can propose is to put the oppressed in the presence of [her] freedom: then [s]he will decide positively and freely.”<sup>59</sup> In willing the freedom of all individuals, one may come into contact with oppressed individuals that believe themselves to be nothing beyond an immanent facticity. For these individuals to become free, they must understand that they too are inherently free. Their freedom cannot

---

<sup>58</sup> Beauvoir, 138.

<sup>59</sup> Beauvoir, 92-93.

be willed by the other, however, because then their freedom will not be their own. Instead, the function of the liberator is to clearly demonstrate the lack in all beings and illustrate the inherent freedom of humanity. The ethical responsibility of the lack of being is to make the other's fundamental lack apparent, thus disclosing the inherent freedom of humanity.

Beauvoir plainly asserts that, "Ethics is the triumph of freedom over facticity [...]"<sup>60</sup> The individual that is aware of her freedom must also conclude that the contents of her history does not define the composition of her being. Instead of dwelling in the comfort of determinism, the lack of being proceeds toward the ambiguity of her future by suspending it in its inherent unfamiliarity, actualizing the trajectory of her being. By engaging in this project, the lack of being also has the ethical responsibility of making the other's freedom apparent as well. Liberation entails the freedom of the oppressor and oppressed alike. If the other's freedom is not willed, one cannot will her own freedom, since "One is never separable from the other."<sup>61</sup> Marx writes, "I am nothing, but I must be everything"<sup>62</sup> and Beauvoir elaborates one hundred years later: "[S]he cannot be regarded as nothing, since the consciousness of all things is within [her]."<sup>63</sup>

## Conclusion

Lack is fundamental to every individual. Though the discourse of truth champions

---

<sup>60</sup> Beauvoir, 48.

<sup>61</sup> Irigaray, *This Sex Which is Not One*, 209.

<sup>62</sup> Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1978), 63.

<sup>63</sup> Beauvoir, *The Ethics of Ambiguity*, 114.

presence, presence itself is composed of lack. Wonder reveals the life that dances within things perceived to be nothing other than pure facticity. The oppressive subject of the logic of truth attempts to envelop the other in her facticity by reducing her to a lack. This lack, however, is universal to all beings, including the oppressors themselves. The ethical responsibility of the lack of being is to acknowledge one's own facticity while transcending it. This movement toward freedom must will the other's freedom as one's own. Revolution is legitimate only if it wills the liberation of all individuals. "If it came to be that each [wo]man did what [s]he must, existence would be saved in each one without there being any need of dreaming of a paradise where all would be reconciled in death."<sup>64</sup>

---

<sup>64</sup> Beauvoir, 173.

## Bibliography

- Ahmed, Sara. *Queer Phenomenology*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Beauvoir, Simone de. *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. Translated by Bernard Frechtman. New York: Philosophical Library, 1949.
- Hekman, Susan. "Simone de Beauvoir and the Beginnings of the Feminine Subject." *Feminist Theory* 16, no. 2 (2015): 137 – 151.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*. Translated by W. R. Boyce Gibson. Eastford: Martino Fine Books, 2017.
- Irigaray, Luce. *Ce sexe qui n'en est pas un*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1977.
- . *This Sex Which is Not One*. Translated by Catherine Porter. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Encore, The Seminar of Jacques Lacan, Book XX: On Feminine Sexuality, The Limits of Love and Knowledge*. Translated by Bruce Fink. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1998.
- Marx, Karl. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume One*. Translated by Ben Fowkes. London: Penguin Books, 1990.
- Marx, Karl and Friedrich Engels. *The Marx-Engels Reader*. Edited by Robert Tucker. New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1978.
- Wadiwel, Dinesh. "‘Like One Who is Bringing his Own Hide to Market:’ Marx, Irigaray, Derrida and Animal Commodification." *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 21, no. 2 (2016): 65-82.