

Feminist Writings
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The Second Sex - Part 5

So, hello and welcome to this NPTEL course entitled Feminist Writings. We were looking at Simone de Beauvoir's introduction to *The Second Sex* and we will conclude the text today in this lecture. So, at the last lecture, we start'opped at how Beauvoir tries to map the whole idea of equality and she says that how certain men - they talk about equality in their very ontological loose sense without really putting that into practice.

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INTRODUCTION

So it is that many men will affirm as if in good faith that women *are* the equals of man and that they have nothing to clamour for, while *at the same time* they will say that women can never be the equals of man and that their demands are in vain. It is, in point of fact, a difficult matter for man to realize the extreme importance of social discriminations which seem outwardly insignificant but which produce in woman moral and intellectual effects so profound that they appear to spring from her original nature.¹ The most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend woman's concrete situation. And there is no reason to put much trust in the men when they rush to the defence of privileges whose full extent they can hardly measure. We shall not, then, permit ourselves to be intimidated by the number and violence of the attacks launched against women, nor to be entrapped by the self-seeking eulogies bestowed on the 'true woman', nor to profit by the enthusiasm for woman's destiny manifested by men who would not for the world have any part of it.

We should consider the arguments of the feminists with no less suspicion, however, for very often their controversial aim deprives them of all real value. If the 'woman question' seems trivial, it is because masculine arrogance has made of it a 'quarrel'; and when quarrelling one no longer reasons well. People have tirelessly sought to prove that woman is



And she says quite clearly over here, in this section I am reading out for you - 'So it is that many men will affirm that, as in good faith, that women are the equals of men and they have nothing to clamour for, while at the same time, they will say that women can never be the equals of man and that the demands are in vain.

So she is talking about the paradox over here - so how women get imprisoned in a paradox by certain men who say that - women and men are equal anyway, so what is the whole need to clamour and fight and rebel for feminist rights or female rights etc. However, when it comes to real rights, they will deny women the rights. So, you know, in that sense, that becomes a very handy tool to imprison women.

'It is in point of fact, a difficult matter for man to realize the extreme importance of social discriminations which seem outwardly insignificant by which produce in women moral and intellectual effects so profound that they appear to spring from her original nature. The most sympathetic of men never fully comprehend woman's concrete situation.'

So she talks about a kind of aporia, a lack of communication, a crisis in communication where men never seem to understand where the crisis of women come from and that becomes a problem. So, hence, we have all this talk about men and women being equal. So what is the need for feminist movements?

What is the need for women's emancipation etc. Where at the same time, what men fail to realize in many occasions is that there is no real rights conferred to women. There could be statutory rights, it could be ontological and sort of, labeled out rights. There could be rights in letter but never in spirit and that is the whole point that Beauvoir is trying to communicate to us.

So, 'there is no reason to put such trust in their men when they rush to the defense of privileges whose full extent they can hardly measure.' Right? So the whole idea of privilege becomes very political over here. So privilege becomes very gendered over here. So Beauvoir talks about how men, they rush to their defense of privileges whose full extent they can hardly measure.

So, you know, and this is what we talked about in the last lecture - the whole idea of internalization. So once we internalize something, we don't realize this is an artificial privilege given to you and that's something you have enjoyed for generations, through centuries of human history and now we just take it for granted, now we just think - oh, this is something I am automatically entitled to.

So it is impossible for men on many occasions to really understand the full extent of the privileges and how these manly privileges are basically a denial of women's rights in a way which is completely unacceptable. Okay, 'so we shall not, then, permit to be intimidated by the number and violence of the attacks launched against women, nor to be entrapped by the self-seeking eulogies bestowed on the 'true woman' nor to profit by the enthusiasm for woman's destiny manifested by men who would not for the world have any part of it.

So, the whole idea of the good woman and the correct woman and the true woman, obviously is a masculine construct, obviously is a construct of male imagination and that is something that Beauvoir says, we should not be intimidated by nor we should be seduced by it. All the whole, she talks about a self seeking eulogies bestowed on the true woman.

Obviously, we talked about how the whole idea of eulogizing the true woman is basically rewarding the subject to be compliant, rewarding the subject to be playing the game according to the manly rules. If you become a loyal subject, if you be a compliant subject, then obviously, you will be rewarded for your compliance, rewarded for your obedience.

Okay, and now she talks about how there are internal problems within feminism that needs to be addressed as well. 'We should consider the arguments of the feminists with no less suspicion. However, for very often their controversial aim deprives them of all real value. If the 'woman question' seems trivial, it is because masculine arrogance has made of it a quarrel; and when quarreling, one no longer reasons well.'

So the whole idea of converting the feminist movement into a quarrel, the whole idea of converting the 'woman question' into a quarrel is something which is systematically done by the masculine arrogance by patriarchal procedures. And once it becomes a quarrel, then obviously, it becomes trivial in quality. It is hard to take a quarrel seriously. So the whole idea of converting a debate into a quarrel is a very systematic maneuver made by men and that is something that Beauvoir is addressing and unpacking.

So, 'people have tirelessly sought to prove that woman is superior, inferior, or equal to man. Some say that, having been differently after Adam,' which is a biblical story of origin that she is born out of Adam's ribs which obviously suggests right away how she is inferior to man because she is born out of a part of a man in a way. So she is a metonymic construct out of a man.

So she is incomplete, she is partial by default. So the origin story, the genesis story itself contains the partiality, it is embedded with the partiality of women. So we have seen that already. So, 'people have tirelessly sought to prove that woman is superior, inferior, or equal to man. Some say that, having been differently after Adam, she is evidently a secondary being.

Other say, on the contrary that Adam was only a rough draft and that God succeeded in producing the human being in perfection when He created Eve.' So the other argument of course is that Adam was a rough draft, Adam was an experiment and then God created the true human being when he created Eve.

'Woman's brain is smaller, yes, but it is relatively larger. Christ was made a man, yes, but perhaps for his greater humility. Each argument at once suggests it is opposite, and both are often fallacious. If we are to gain understanding, we must get out of these ruts; we must discard the vague notions of superiority, inferiority, equality, which have hitherto corrupted every discussion of the subject and start afresh.'

So Beauvoir has very little time, has very little patience for all these ideas about inferiority, superiority and she finds them equally reifying. By reifying, obviously, what I mean is commodifying, objectifying, so these arguments about inferiority and superiority, so when you talk about the inferiority of woman, you are obviously being condescending and offensive and patronizing.

But Beauvoir would equally argue that when you talk about the superiority of woman, you are being equally romanticized, you are being equally exotic, you are becoming equally commodifying. So both are fallacious. And both are incorrect arguments according to Beauvoir.

So we should get rid of these vague notions of equality, superiority, inferiority and we'll deal with the real problem of women, in a real situation, real material conditions; that is something which Beauvoir is more interested in rather than this loosely formed discursive formations of inferiority and superiority which are equally fallacious according to Beauvoir.

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reasons well. People have tirelessly sought to prove that woman is superior, inferior, or equal to man. Some say that, having been created after Adam, she is evidently a secondary being; others say on the contrary that Adam was only a rough draft and that God succeeded in producing the human being in perfection when He created Eve. Woman's brain is smaller; yes, but it is relatively larger. Christ was made a man; yes, but perhaps for his greater humility. Each argument at once suggests its opposite, and both are often fallacious. If we are to gain understanding, we must get out of these ruts; we must discard the vague notions of superiority, inferiority, equality which have hitherto corrupted every discussion of the subject and start afresh.

Very well, but just how shall we pose the question? And, to begin with, who are we to propound it at all? Man is at once judge and party to the case; but so is woman. What we need is an angel – neither man nor woman – but where shall we find one? Still, the angel would be poorly qualified to speak, for an angel is ignorant of all the basic facts involved in the problem. With a hermaphrodite we should be no better off, for here the situation is most peculiar; the hermaphrodite is not really the combination of a whole man and a whole woman, but consists of parts of each and thus is neither. It looks to me as if there are, after all, certain

¹ The specific purpose of Book Two of this study is to describe this process.



Okay, so 'very well, but just how shall we pose the question?' How do we get to the real thing, how do we address the question as it really stands before us; the woman question. 'And to begin with, who are we to propound it at all? Man is at once judge and party to the case, but so is woman.

What we need is an angel - neither man nor woman' so we need a different sex, a third sex, maybe, someone that is neutral to male as well as woman. Right? So someone who can sit and listen to the arguments and then judge, I mean this is obviously is a very hypothetical situation that Beauvoir is suggesting. But she is making a point over here, by suggesting this hypothetical diagram as it were.

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Very well, but just how shall we pose the question? And, to begin with, who are we to propound it at all? Man is at once judge and party to the case; but so is woman. What we need is an angel – neither man nor woman – but where shall we find one? Still, the angel would be poorly qualified to speak, for an angel is ignorant of all the basic facts involved in the problem. With a hermaphrodite we should be no better off, for here the situation is most peculiar; the hermaphrodite is not really the combination of a whole man and a whole woman, but consists of parts of each and thus is neither. It looks to me as if there are, after all, certain

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women who are best qualified to elucidate the situation of woman. Let us not be misled by the sophism that because Epimenides was a Cretan he was necessarily a liar; it is not a mysterious essence that compels men and women to act in good or in bad faith, it is their situation that inclines them more or less towards the search for truth. Many of today's women, fortunate in the restoration of all the privileges pertaining to the estate of the human being, can afford the luxury of impartiality – we even recognize its necessity. We are no longer like our partisan elders; by and large we have won the game. In recent debates on the status of women the United Nations has persistently maintained that the equality of the sexes is now becoming a reality, and already some of us have never had to sense in our femininity an inconvenience or an obstacle. Many problems appear to us to be more pressing than those which concern us in particular, and this detachment even allows us to hope that our attitude will be objective. Still, we know the feminine world more intimately than do the men because we have our roots in it, we grasp more immediately than do men what it means to a human being to be feminine; and we are more concerned with such knowledge. I have said that there are more pressing problems, but this does not prevent us from seeing some importance in asking how the fact of being women will affect our lives. What opportunities precisely have been given us and what withheld? What fate awaits



'Still, the angel would poorly qualify to speak for an angel is ignorant of all the basic facts involved in the problem. With a hermaphrodite, we would be no better off for here the situation is most peculiar; the hermaphrodite is not really the combination of the whole man and a whole woman, but consists of parts of each and thus is neither. It looks to me as if they are after all, certain women who are best qualified to elucidate the situation of women.'

So, I think she, this is a very sophisticated technique; she first talks about hypothetical situations, she says - should we go for an angel, should we go for someone who comes outside; a neutral person. And then she quickly dismisses the idea and says that - obviously,

the angel is ignorant of the situation, the angel would not be situated, nor should he existentially discursively to understand that real quality of men, women and it talks about should we go for a hermaphrodite; someone who's got manly as well as womanly features.

But then she dismisses that as well very quickly by saying - a hermaphrodite is not a combination of a whole man and a whole woman, but a hermaphrodite is a metonymic construct, has a metonymic condition, where certain parts of a woman are combined together. So that would not do.

And then she comes to the real explanation and says – it is women, after all, certain women who are best qualified to elucidate the situation of women. So it is only in certain women that you get the empathy, the association, the intellectual, emotional and existential kinship which is necessary to understand or address or to listen or to interlocute what the women question.

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asking how the fact of being women will affect our lives. What opportunities precisely have been given us and what withheld? What fate awaits our younger sisters, and what directions should they take? It is significant that books by women on women are in general animated in our day less by a wish to demand our rights than by an effort towards clarity and understanding. As we emerge from an era of excessive controversy, this book is offered as one attempt among others to confirm that statement.

But it is doubtless impossible to approach any human problem with a mind free from bias. The way in which questions are put, the points of view assumed, presuppose a relativity of interest; all characteristics imply values, and every objective description, so called, implies an ethical background. Rather than attempt to conceal principles more or less definitely implied, it is better to state them openly, at the beginning. This will make it unnecessary to specify on every page in just what sense one uses such words as *superior*, *inferior*, *better*, *worse*, *progress*, *reaction*, and the like. If we survey some of the works on woman, we note that one of the points of view most frequently adopted is that of the public good, the general interest; and one always means by this the benefit of society as one wishes it to be maintained or established. For our part, we hold that the only public good is that which assures the private good of the citizens; we shall pass judgment on institutions according to their effectiveness in giving



Right, so that is something that she talks about very very clearly. And then she moves on to talk about how it is important to rid us from all kinds of bias and how bias can be a dangerous situation when it comes to the woman in question. And then she says this - 'It is doubtless impossible to approach any human problem with a mind free from bias.'

So it is impossible, at least logically speaking, to be a completely biasless person. Because every human judgement, every human intervention is from a position of subjectivity. So it is a subjective position, it is a subjective intervention that is obviously operative. So it is

impossible to have a non-subjective position, a completely objective situation to any problem, to completely objective address or unpacking or examination of any problem.

So, it is impossible to get a mind free from bias. 'The way in which questions are put, the points of view assumed, presuppose a relativity of interest' - it is a calibration of interests, there is an inequality of interest. Someone is more interested in something, someone is more invested in something intellectually, emotionally, existentially than other people.

So there is always a relativity of interest and that is a presupposition we must acknowledge, right? We must acknowledge a fact that there is always a relativity of interest, 'all characteristics imply values and every objective description so called, implies an ethical background.' So there is always an ethical background, there's always a phenomenal background, there's always an existential background, to any objective situations, or any objective descriptions - no such thing for instance as a purely objective condition. right?

Because the moment you listen to it, you listen to it with your own mind, with your own system, with your own phenomenal being, with your own sentient self. And that obviously makes us subjective by default. So what is the way out of this? What is the way out of this endless subjectivity? Should we deny it or should we acknowledge it – that is what Beauvoir is debating over here.

And this is what she says - 'Rather than to attempt to conceal principles, more or less definitely implied, it is better to state them openly at the beginning.' Right? So it is better to state them openly at the beginning, it is better to state openly your subjective position at the very beginning. This will make it unnecessary to specify on every page - in just what sense what one uses such words such as superior, inferior, better, worse, progress, reaction and the like.

So all these words which keep coming up, the moment you reveal the principles in operation, the moment you reveal and acknowledge the principles, your subjective positions in operations and all these debates about superiority, inferiority, better, worse, progress, reaction would become redundant. It is something that Beauvoir wants to get rid of.

So 'if we survey some of the works in women, we note that, one of the points of view most frequently adopted is that of public good; the general interest in one always means by this the benefit of society as one wishes it to be maintained or established. For our part, we hold that

the only public good is that which assures the private good of the citizens, which will pass judgment on institutions according to their effectiveness and giving concrete opportunities to individuals.

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concrete opportunities to individuals. But we do not confuse the idea of private interest with that of happiness, although that is another common point of view. Are not women of the harem more happy than women voters? Is not the housekeeper happier than the working-woman? It is not too clear just what the word *happy* really means and still less what true values it may mask. There is no possibility of measuring the happiness of others, and it is always easy to describe as happy the situation in which one wishes to place them.

In particular those who are condemned to stagnation are often pronounced happy on the pretext that happiness consists in being at rest. This notion we reject, for our perspective is that of existentialist ethics. Every subject plays his part as such specifically through exploits or projects that serve as a mode of transcendence; he achieves liberty only through a continual reaching out towards other liberties. There is no justification for present existence other than its expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every time transcendence falls back into immanence, stagnation, there is a degradation of existence into the '*en-soi*' – the brutish life of subjection to given conditions – and of liberty into constraint and contingency. This downfall represents a moral fault if the sub-



But we do not confuse the idea of private interest with that of happiness. Although that is another common point of view. So this is a very important point that Beauvoir is saying. And Beauvoir says that, you know, we keep hearing the whole idea of public good, public welfare etc. But Beauvoir says quite clearly that, you know, private, public good can only happen according to our understanding, according to Beauvoir's feminist understanding.

If it shows private good for all the citizens. So if every person is happy at a micro level, at a micro existential level, then that will obviously contribute towards a broader narrative of public welfare and public goodness. So that is the effectiveness, that's the only criterion through which we can pass judgments and institutions, the effectiveness in terms of giving concrete opportunities to individuals, opportunities of growth, opportunities of welfare, opportunities of security, etc.

But then, she is very quick to sort of, come up with the second or the caveat that we do not confuse the idea of private interest with that of happiness. It is not about happiness, it is not about happiness quotient. Private interest is a different game altogether, private interest is about opportunities for growth, it about opportunities to make a difference, it is about

opportunities to exercise and assume agency. Right? And that is something that Beauvoir is very quick to demarcate.

'Are not women of the harem more happy than women voters?' So again, happiness is a very fallacious argument, happiness is a very erroneous yardstick of private good according to Beauvoir. And she says that the women of the harem might be happier might be happier than women who go out to vote. So happiness quotient is a very erroneous quotient to go by if we are looking at feminist emancipation, if we are looking at female liberation etc.

It is not the house keeper happier than a working woman. You know, the working woman might be more unhappy than the house keeper. The house keeper is perhaps more secure and more happy and more stable in her condition, in her situation, but that doesn't mean that it is necessarily a more desirable condition - the house keeper's job compared to the working woman's.

So compared to the voter, the voting woman, the woman at the harem is probably more happy, is probably more secure, probably more comfortable. But that's not the point. The point about a private good, it's about private interest, it's about opportunities, it's not about happiness. And that's something that Beauvoir is so clearly demarcating at this point.

Okay, 'It is not too clear just whether what happy really means and still less what true values it may mask.' So the word 'happy', happiness can be a very very deceptive condition. You could be happy without any agency at all. You can be happy without any right at all. You can just be happy because you have been rewarded for being a loyal subject. So happiness is a very very dangerous and deceptive yardstick to go by.

Actually, if you want more progress, if you want more liberation, you should be able to face unhappiness. Because the more unhappy you are, the more desirous you become for more opportunities. So happiness can make you lazy, happiness can make you complacent, happiness can make you passive or agency less in many conditions. So happiness is not really a reliable yardstick, a reliable parameter according to Beauvoir over here.

'There is no possibility of measuring the happiness of others and it is always easy to describe as happy the situation in which one wishes to place them.' So again, the whole idea comes back to the male imagination, the male fantasy of placing the woman in a condition where she is happy. The happiness is not what Beauvoir wants. Beauvoir wants unhappiness,

Beauvoir wants growth, rebellion, retaliation, discontent and only through discontent can you grow and achieve true agency and true liberation.

So because happiness is something which can be acquired very easily through material processes. You take a house keeper, you take a person in a harem, you take a woman with no agency at all and just give her something out of a reward. And that is supposed to make her happy, that is designed to make her happy. So happiness becomes a very very easy way out in this kind of discursive debates. That's something is mentioning quite clearly.

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ject consents to it; if it is inflicted upon him, it spells frustration and oppression. In both cases it is an absolute evil. Every individual concerned to justify his existence feels that his existence involves an undefined need to transcend himself, to engage in freely chosen projects.

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she — a free and autonomous being like all human creatures — nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (*conscience*) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) — who always regards the self as the essential — and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential. How can a human being in woman's situation attain fulfilment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked? How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit woman's liberty and how can they be overcome? These are the fundamental questions on which I would fain throw some light. This means that I am interested in the fortunes of the individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of liberty.

Quite evidently this problem would be without significance if we were



Okay, so now Beauvoir goes on to say - the peculiarity which marks a woman condition. So what is the peculiarity? Now, what peculiarly signalizes - the situation of women is that she, a free and autonomous being like all human creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of 'the other'. So we talked about how the production of the Other is always a very handy process for any kind of control, for any kind of control narrative, any domination narrative. Right?

So you need to produce 'the other' through a very systematic material process in order to promote and produce and perpetuate your authority as a figure, your privilege as a figure. So a woman living in a condition despite being free and autonomous, being like all human creatures, she finds herself as a permanent 'other', some kind of perspective, some kind of gaze.

'They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since the transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign.' So the whole idea of transcendence becomes very very problematic. The whole idea of stabilizing becomes very problematic.

So again, we are back to debating what Beauvoir talks about - the problems of happiness, the pitfalls of being happy, the pitfalls of stabilization. So transcendence, stabilization - these are very easy and convenient traps set by the masculinist and patriarchal perspective where a woman is supposed to be a transcending sort of material orders. A woman is supposed to be moving beyond certain kind of material, earthly things.

And that the kind of value system, a virtue narrative which is created out of it. And obviously, the virtue narrative is meant to imprison the woman, just so she doesn't demand what should rightfully be hers. So that is something that Beauvoir is very-very quick to point out in this point, in this section.

'The drama of a woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject, which is the ego - who obviously rewards the self as essential and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential. So this drama between essential and inessential, drama between the fundamental aspirations, the rightful aspirations, and the value added aspirations which are obviously constructed by the patriarchal perspective.

And that, the fact that a woman gets entrapped in these two situation, between these two situations - that dramatized the woman's situation that makes it a theater of conflict sometimes. A theater of conformity sometimes, a theater of conflict sometimes, but it is a theater nonetheless. It is a performative quality that Beauvoir is talking about over here.

Okay, how can a human being in woman's situation attain fulfillment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked?' So this is like a spatial narrative that Beauvoir is offering to us. So what are roads open for the woman, what are the roads which are blocked before the woman? 'How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit a woman's liberty and how can they be overcome?

These are the fundamental questions on which I would fain throw light. This means that I am interesting in the fortunes of an individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of

liberty. And that is a very very important and a very profoundly political statement that Beauvoir is making.

So first of all, she asks us these questions - what are the roads open before women? Which are the roads which are blocked? And how do you navigate through all these agentic and non-agentic quantities or qualities around you? How do you navigate the permissible and non-permissible situations in front of you? And the navigation creates or generates agency.

The navigation generates a sense of rebellion, a sense of aspiration, a sense of subversion and once you take that into account, you come to the automatic, you come to the conclusion that - what you are really interested in is not happiness but liberty. And liberty can often times come with unhappiness. Liberty can often times come with discontent.

So contentment of happiness can sometimes make you lazy discursively or politically or intellectually or ideologically lazy because you are just happy because you are being fed, you are being rewarded, you are being given benefits for being a compliant and conforming subject. And that's not something that Beauvoir wants.

So liberty is a much more loaded term. Liberty comes with happiness, liberty comes with the aspiration to navigate across the permissible and the non-permissible spaces - the permissible and the non-permissible parameters of value, of virtue, or morality and obviously of the entire woman question.

So, what are the roads available to her? Which are the roads unavailable to her? And this whole idea of negotiating with the available and the unavailable becomes the process of liberty, the process of emancipation as understood by Beauvoir and is pointed out by Beauvoir.

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ject consents to it; if it is inflicted upon him, it spells frustration and oppression. In both cases it is an absolute evil. Every individual concerned to justify his existence feels that his existence involves an undefined need to transcend himself, to engage in freely chosen projects.

Now, what peculiarly signalizes the situation of woman is that she — a free and autonomous being like all human creatures — nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the Other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and for ever transcended by another ego (*conscience*) which is essential and sovereign. The drama of woman lies in this conflict between the fundamental aspirations of every subject (ego) — who always regards the self as the essential — and the compulsions of a situation in which she is the inessential. How can a human being in woman's situation attain fulfilment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked? How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit woman's liberty and how can they be overcome? These are the fundamental questions on which I would fain throw some light. This means that I am interested in the fortunes of the individual as defined not in terms of happiness but in terms of liberty.

Quite evidently this problem would be without significance if we were



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to believe that woman's destiny is inevitably determined by physiological, psychological, or economic forces. Hence I shall discuss first of all the light in which woman is viewed by biology, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism. Next I shall try to show exactly how the concept of the 'truly feminine' has been fashioned — why woman has been defined as the Other — and what have been the consequences from man's point of view. Then from woman's point of view I shall describe the world in which women must live; and thus we shall be able to envisage the difficulties in their way as, endeavouring to make their escape from the sphere hitherto assigned them, they aspire to full membership in the human race.



Okay, she concludes this introduction by saying - 'quite evidently, this problem would be without significance if we were to believe that woman's destiny is inevitably determined by physiological, psychological economic forces. So if you think that woman's destiny is over determined by economic principles, by psychological forces or physiological forces and over determination means over influence - something which controls entirely.

So if you assume that, then obviously, this debate becomes redundant, this debate becomes completely insignificant. So this problem would be without significance if we were to believe, if we start with that belief system, if we start with that hypothesis, that women condition, the condition of women is over determined, by economic principles, forces,

physiological forces and psychological forces, then obviously that becomes a problem. We can't really move on from there.

Hence, I shall discuss, first of all, the light in which the woman is viewed by biology, psychoanalysis and historical materialism. 'Next, I shall try to show exactly how the concept of truly feminine has been fashioned, why woman has been defined as the other and what have been the consequences from man's point of view.' And the word fashion is very very important over here.

Because it denotes and connotes a sense of artificiality, it is something which is designed. So we talk about self fashioning and designing yourself in order to fit into a particular narrative or maybe subvert a certain kind of narrative. So what Beauvoir is saying over here is - she is interested to find out what were the material discursive ideational abstract processes which fashioned this idea of the true woman - the truly feminine woman.

So what were the economic underpinnings of this? What were the ideological underpinnings of this? What were the discursive investments into this which went into the making of this fashion of the truly feminine woman? So, that is something that she will unpack. So she is not really moving away discursivity, she is not really moving away from the economic principles at all, but she is also careful not to let that over determine the woman condition.

So, she is interested to find out why and how, what were the processes, material, abstract economy, discursive ideational that informed this idea of woman being defined as the other. And what have been the consequences from man's point of view, from man's point of view, from the patriarchal perspective, from the masculinist perspective, what have been the consequences of this kind of othering from that point or view.

'Then from the woman's point of view, I shall describe the world in which woman must live' the ideal world in that woman must live in, the world that women must aspire to achieve, to acquire, through struggle, through liberation, through retaliation etc. 'And thus we shall be able to envisage the difficulties in the way as endeavoring to make the escape from despair hitherto assigned to them, they aspire to full membership in a human race.'

So, you know, the whole idea of membership becomes very important. Obviously it is a very political terms as well. So in order to achieve the full membership, in order to achieve the ideal membership, the real membership, there should be struggle, there should be escape,

there should be a move away from the hypothetical situation which has hitherto being imposed on them, right?

They should endeavor to make their escape from despair hitherto assigned to them, assigned to them by patriarchy, assigned to them by men. So women must liberate themselves from that sphere and then try and aspire to achieve a full membership in the human race. So that membership becomes a very important term at the end of Beauvoir's argument and that's something that she aspired to achieve, she wants women to see that as a real condition, as an aspirational category.

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THE women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity; they are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways; but they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. Reared by women within a feminine world, their normal destiny is marriage, which still means practically subordination to man; for masculine prestige is far from extinction, resting still upon solid economic and social foundations. We must therefore study the traditional destiny of woman with some care. In Book Two I shall seek to describe how woman undergoes her apprenticeship, how she experiences her position, in what kind of universe she is confined, what modes of escape are vouchsafed her. Then only -- with so much understood -- shall we be able to comprehend the problems of women, the heirs of a burdensome past, who are striving to build a new future. When I use the words *woman* or *feminine* I obviously refer to no archetype, no changeless essence whatever; the reader must understand the phrase 'in the present state of education and custom' after most of my statements. It is not our concern here to proclaim eternal verities, but rather to describe the common basis that underlies every individual feminine existence.



Okay, so just to, this is introduction to book 2 with which I will conclude the lecture and conclude this particular text. What Beauvoir is saying - 'The women of today are in a fair way to dethrone the myth of femininity.' So the whole idea, the myth of femininity, of being this ideal truly feminine woman, which is obviously a patriarchal myth, which is obviously a masculinist myth and that's something that the women of today are attempting or should attempt to dethrone or debunk the myth of femininity.

'They are beginning to affirm their independence in concrete ways. But they do not easily succeed in living completely the life of a human being. Reared by women within a feminine world, the normal destiny is marriage, which still means practically subordination to man; for masculine prestige is far from extinction resting still upon solid economic and social foundations.

So marriage is an institution, still is a massive success and she is saying - Beauvoir - that the women of today, they are much more equipped intellectually, existentially, politically, to dethrone the myth of femininity. It must also not be forgotten that they reared by women who believe in a feminine world.

So these women end up with marriage which is very much a patriarchal construct which will reaffirm and consolidate, more often than not, the superiority of men - economically, socially, politically. And obviously, Beauvoir is saying quite clearly - when a masculine prestige the arrogance in masculinity, the prestige quotient of masculinity is far from being extinct.

And marriage becomes a very very solid foundation, it is a spectacular example of the masculinist, economic and social foundations. Remember the opening line of pride and prejudice by Jane Austin, which says - It's a truth universally acknowledged that a man, a single man in possession of a great fortune must be in want of a wife.

So the whole idea of wanting a wife as a commodity which is the extension of the great fortune is something which has happened through generations and that's how marriages worked, at least in the western liberal world that Beauvoir is addressing, Beauvoir is speaking from.

So, 'we must therefore study the traditional destiny of women with some care. In Book 2, I shall I seek to describe how women undergoes under her apprenticeship, how she experiences her position and what kind of universe she is confined, what modes of escape are vouchsafed her. Then only with so much understood shall we able to comprehend the problems that women, the heirs of a burdensome past who was striving to build a new future.'

So, they have inherited a burden from the past, from their mothers and from their grandmothers and that's been sort of conferred on them through the legacy of patriarchy - they have inherited the patriarchal load, the burden of patriarchy and they must unburden themselves and move on to a more fulfilling destiny, as a more full member of a human race.

So, this idea of being a fuller member of the human race is something which the women are aspiring to do at this point. And they should aspire to do. 'When I use the world 'woman' or 'feminine' it is obviously referred to no archetype, no changeless essence whatever; the reader must understand a phrase in the present value, in the present state of education and custom after most of my comments.'

So she is localizing her understanding of woman, she is localizing the understanding of feminine. So she is saying that the reader should understand why at the very beginning, that when I use the word woman or feminine, I'm not talking about some timeless essence of femininity, I'm talking about the current condition which produces femininity through education, through liberation, through political struggle etc.

So, we need to topicalize, localize and materialize these definitions and Beauvoir, very very inceptions pointing out - this is how she means these terms, this is how she addresses and

uses these terms. So one should not read these terms in some kind of a classic, timeless category.

'It is not a concern here to proclaim eternal verities', so Beauvoir is obviously moving away from any idea of eternal truth or eternal verity, it is not something that concerns her at all. 'But rather to describe the common basis that underlies every human, every individual feminine existence.' So she is talking about the more earthly material, immediate problems which bother women, which concern women.

So it is not really talking about eternal situations or timeless situations, at all. And that is not something she is interested at all. But she is interested in looking at the urgent needs of women and how in addressing the urgent needs, can we move on to a more fuller world, a fuller world where women and men have equal membership, equal claims of membership in the human race.

And that sense of fulfillment can come with liberation, not with happiness and she has made an excellent point I think, where she talks about the deceptive quality of happiness - how happiness can make you apolitical, how happiness can make you non-subversive or happiness can make you compliant very very easily. Whereas if you look for liberation, the true sense of the term, you must be prepared to face unhappiness. And that is something that Beauvoir is talking about throughout this book.

So with that, we conclude the introduction to *The Second Sex*. I hope you realize that this is a profoundly political book which talks about the emancipation of women through history, the study of history and the study of the future, the possibilities of the future that hold all these aspirations for women and all the things that women can achieve through material struggle, through political struggle and it is a profoundly political book which resonate with us in the same way as the day when it was published in the 60s.

So with that we conclude the introduction to *The Second Sex* and we move on to the next text in the next lectures. Thank you for your attention.