

Those Condemned to Stagnation

One is not born but becomes a woman
- Simone de Beauvoir

Those condemned to stagnation are often proclaimed happy on the pretext that happiness consists in being at rest. I am interested in the individual not in terms of happiness but of liberty. There is no justification for this present existence other than expansion into an indefinitely open future. Every human being feels a need to transcend, to achieve liberty through reaching toward other liberties.

Every time transcendence falls back into immanence there is a degradation of existence and of liberty into the brutish life of constraint and contingency. Without a doubt it is more comfortable to endure bondage than to work for one's liberation; likewise the dead are more suited to earth than the living. Yet man is defined as a human being, woman as female, an object, her transcendence transcended by another, her wings clipped then said not to know how to fly.

To emancipate woman is not to deny her relations to man but to refuse to confine her to them. The point is not for woman to simply take power out of man's hands — that would not change anything about the world — but to destroy that fascist notion of power. The body is not a thing, it is a situation: let her have her independent existence and she will continue nonetheless to exist for him also.

Mutually recognizing each other as subject, each will remain an other for the other. Separate beings face to face in freedom and seeking through one another justification of existence will always live an adventure. The reciprocity of their relations will not do away with the miracles of *desire, passion, love, dream* and the words that move us — *giving, conquering, uniting* — will not lose their meaning.