RE-CONCEIVING "BORDERS": A FEMINIST PRAGMATIC PHENOMENOLOGY

FOR POSTCOLONIAL FEMINIST

ETHICS AND POLITICS

by

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As an increasing number of differentially situated women implicated within the global economy continue to come into contact with each other, a host of opportunities and challenges are inaugurated for feminist praxes across borders and differences. The cycles of dependencies accentuated by globalization come hand-in-hand with concerns about unequal distribution, unequal access to resources, and the rise of fundamentalist ideologies. All these together remind us of the urgency of collaboration and cooperation across differences. At the same time, the presence of differences and inequalities threaten to undermine the spirit for collaboration at any given moment. We, therefore, need analytical frameworks that are able to do justice to our identities and agency within interactive spaces. We also need better evaluative frameworks for theorizing ethical responsibility and political concerns about justice within a transnational space that take these realities into account.

I argue for the possibility of a new "critical multicultural transnational feminism" and develop a theoretical framework to anchor this vision in my dissertation. The "critical" component emphasizes the vision for a feminism that is, at once, a self-reflective praxis. The juxtaposition of "multicultural" and "transnational" seeks to emphasize the need for recognizing both the limitations and the importance of borders on our lives. To do this, I articulate an alternative logic of "borders" so as to develop an interactive ontology for thinking about transnationalism and transnational identity. I then take up the project of envisioning the ethical-political project of "solidarity" in the light of this ontology. The philosophical framework that I develop is inspired by the philosophical pragmatism of Mary Parker Follett and Josiah Royce, the existential phenomenology of Simone de Beauvoir, and the work of various postcolonial feminists such as bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, and Ofelia Schutte. This framework is a feminist pragmatic phenomenology for postcolonial feminist ethics and politics, which can serve as a normative paradigm and a framework of analysis. Finally, I use the framework developed in the dissertation to analyze and evaluate aspects of the international industry in surrogacy-related fertility tourism – a paradigmatic instance of incommensurability and inequality among women within the global economy.

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I dedicate this work in feminist philosophy to the woman who taught me the true meaning of strength, resolve, love and compassion, and made it possible for me to come this far in my life – my mother.

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CHAPTER I

CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL TRANSNATIONAL FEMINISMS: BEGINNING THE SEARCH FOR NEW ETHICAL-POLITICAL DIRECTIONS

The landscape that contemporary feminists find themselves in is a complicated one. As an increasing number of differentially situated women implicated within a global economy continue to come into contact with each other (either intentionally or unintentionally, and whether they choose to or not), this landscape is becoming more and more complex everyday. Differences, in turn, result from the presence of multifarious *borders* within the transnational space. Borders help to *contain* and *constrain*. By doing so, they hold things apart, and institute *difference*. Some of the borders that transnational movement has to contend with include, among others, various cultural, religious, racial, class, linguistic, and national borders.

Over and above increasing direct face-to-face interactions, globalization has also created opportunities for establishing connections through cultural productions, technology, transnational justice networks, etc. The outcome of contact, as history tells us, has sometimes been violent and destructive. It has been creative and constructive in others. What is evident, however, is that it is becoming increasingly difficult to remain completely isolated from, and ignorant about the lives of others situated thousands of miles from us. We can no longer remain complacent about the fact that we can impact and shape somebody's life at such distances - perhaps to a much greater degree than we are comfortable with acknowledging.

This background poses a host of opportunities and challenges for feminist praxis. The cycles of dependencies accentuated by globalization come hand-in-hand with concerns over unequal distribution, unequal access to resources, and the rise of fundamentalist ideologies. Moreover, an increasing number of women are moving across borders as part of the global circuits of human capital. All these together pose very real challenges to women's liberatory projects all over the world, as they remind us of the urgency of collaboration and cooperation. At the same time, and even as globalization creates cycles of interdependence, the presence of these very differences and inequalities threatens to undermine the spirit for collaboration at any given moment. The situation is complicated for feminism because it is often one woman in the role of a consumer confronting another who is the service provider. This creates new chains of power imbalance between women, and becomes a determining factor for whether globalization will translate as opportunity or oppression in the life of any particular individual or group. It is, therefore, imperative for any notion of solidarity or any vision of an inclusive feminism to take these differences seriously, if it hopes to make any real change in the lives of women. We need new analytical frameworks that are able to do justice to our identities and agencies within interactive spaces with greater success. We also need better evaluative frameworks for theorizing ethical responsibility and political concerns about justice within a transnational space, that take their start from these realities.

Chandra Mohanty in her book, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, issues an urgent call to feminists against this culturally and politically complex background. She points toward the need for feminism to be a decolonizing praxis. Mohanty thinks that decolonizing feminism must involve both,

> [a] careful critique of the ethics and politics of Eurocentrism, and a corresponding analysis of the difficulties and joys of crossing cultural, national, racial, and class boundaries in the search for feminist communities anchored in justice and equality. (2003, 11)

This definition of "decolonization," as it applies to feminist scholarship and theory, takes into account a need felt by some third-wave postcolonial feminists to move beyond the conceptual framework of traditional liberal feminism on the one hand, and to avoid reification of difference on the other. As Mohanty points out, "our most expansive and inclusive visions of feminism need to be attentive to borders while learning to transcend them." (2003, 2) Thus, among other important themes identified by her that need to be addressed at this point by third-wave feminists and tasks that I take up in the course of this dissertation, are those of trying to think in a more productive way about "the politics of difference and the challenge of solidarity," and of "the building of an ethics of crossing cultural, sexual, national, class, and racial borders." (2003, 10) This highlights the need for feminist orientations that are culturally sensitive, but are willing to confront and negotiate their own ethnocentric biases at the same time. Otherwise, it becomes virtually impossible to lay any basis for thinking about responsibility toward the "other."[1] I also think that any attempt to "decolonize" feminism must incorporate an implicit demand for feminism to be a self-reflective praxis.

My project argues for the possibility of a new *"critical multicultural transnational feminism."* The "critical" component emphasizes the vision for a feminism that is, at once, a self-reflective praxis. The juxtaposition of "multicultural" and "transnational" seeks to emphasize the need for recognizing both the limitations and the importance of borders on individual lives, that is, the need to yield a "feminism without

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[1] At this point, Ofelia Schutte's call for a "pluricultural feminist perspective" (2000, 49) seems to converge with Mohanty's call for a "critical multicultural feminism" (2003, 125).

borders" which does not become a "border-less feminism" (Mohanty 2003, 2). There is a need for women to work with each other and for each other across national, cultural, racial, class, and other boundaries (transnational praxis) for maximizing each other's potentials. At the same time, adequate attention must be paid to the borders instituting differences, as these boundaries are responsible for shaping each life differently. Under these circumstances, I think that a truly decolonizing postcolonial feminism would be one that can successfully weave in a pluralistic political vision and a robust scheme for identity politics, with its vision of transnational collaboration and responsibility. Perhaps the two most important moments in my dissertation, therefore, include the articulation of an *alternative logic of "borders"* so as to develop an *interactive ontology* for thinking about transnationalism and transnational identity, and the project of envisioning an ethical-political project of *"solidarity"* in light of this ontology.

I think that a critical multicultural transnational feminist ethical-political ethos would be able to guide the praxis of responsibility and cooperation across borders in a better way. In this dissertation, therefore, I undertake the task of developing a theoretical framework for grounding my vision of a critical multicultural transnational feminist orientation as outlined above. The theoretical framework is one that is pragmatically oriented and phenomenologically rooted. For this, I primarily draw on resources from the philosophical tradition of existential phenomenology with emphasis on the philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir, the philosophical pragmatism of Mary Parker Follett and Josiah Royce, and the work of various postcolonial feminists such as bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, and Ofelia Schutte. In the end, my aim is to come up with the blueprint for a framework that can serve as an analytical framework (geared towards making better

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sense of the experiences of border-crossing and containment), and a normative framework (providing us with directions for a more responsible praxis across borders) at the same time. It is a *feminist pragmatic phenomenology for postcolonial feminist ethics and politics.*

I must note that in using the term, "ontology," I do not wish to make any absolute claim about the ultimate nature of reality or to deploy it in the dominant philosophical sense of doing "metaphysics." Rather, I use the term from a pragmatist philosophical perspective, as a way of making sense of and understanding experience. The category of experience has special significance to pragmatists. Dewey provides interesting insight into "experience" when he calls us to attend to the terminology of the "real" versus the "true" in his essay "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism." Although "truth" has to do with inquiry, the givenness of any particular experience and its weight on our actions, reactions, decisions, will, judgment, and lived orientations is very "real" irrespective of its truth-value. In a crucial sense, the phenomenological and ontological levels become deeply intertwined within the pragmatist scheme. As such, "ontology" can never be about the search for any ultimate, unmediated, and metaphysical substance or essence.[2] In its skepticism about essences, a pragmatist use of the term "ontology" shares a similar impetus to existential phenomenology with its focus on nothingness and existence.

I retain the term "ontology" to emphasize the solidity and stability of experience, and to avoid the tendency to look at things as simply discursive or arbitrary. Furthermore, as will become evident from an analysis of Royce's logic in subsequent chapters, there is no strict line of demarcation between the logical and ontological, on the

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[2] For detailed analysis of the distinction between the "real" and the "true" and for a pragmatist understanding of the "real," see Dewey, "The Postulate of Immediate Empiricism."

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one hand, and of these two with the ethical and the political, on the other, within a pragmatist scheme. Concepts and categories emerge through processes of inquiry, relative to problems-at-hand and situated agents. A great deal, nevertheless, is at stake with how we categorize, and define, and then what we do with these categories and definitions in real situations. Therefore, any frame of analysis inevitably has a particular ontological weight. My use of the term "ontology" must be understood in light of the commitments mentioned above, and this explains why I consider it important to interweave the levels of phenomenology, ontology, logic, ethics, and politics in my work.[3]

One: Contemporary Feminist Dilemmas: Mapping the Current Feminist Landscape of Ethical-Political Praxis

Postcolonial feminist theorists and activists have raised serious concerns about a traditional liberal feminist politics of sameness, and especially, its practical manifestation in the second-wave of the western women's movement. Such politics has had a tendency to sacrifice differences and plurality at the altar of similarity. Borders seem to melt away insofar as they are not attributed a central role in the constitution of gendered identities. Specificity of group identities is rendered invisible under the garb of "common oppression," thereby, giving way to a border-less political perspective of "global sisterhood."[4] "The concept of "global sisterhood," no doubt, carries with it the vision and

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[3] Mohanty also highlights the need for tying in the ethical with the political when she writes, "Just as radical or critical multiculturalism cannot be the mere sum or coexistence of different cultures in a profoundly unequal, colonized world, multicultural feminism cannot assume the existence of a dialogue among feminists from different communities without specifying a just and ethical basis for such a dialogue." (2003, 125)

[4] Numerous feminists of color have pointed this out. bell hooks's *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, and Chandra Mohanty's *Feminism Without Borders* are important resources both for understanding some of

ethical drive to build community across differences. However, as postcolonial feminist critics of border-less feminisms point out, assuming sisterhood to be given on the basis of abstract and essentializing markers as "common oppression" fails to accommodate actual heterogeneities and discontinuities between women. "Common oppression," as a feminist concept, reduces all oppression to gender oppression, without understanding that domination often has the character of a matrix (Collins 1990) due to the overlap between different aspects of our identity. As such, I read "common oppression" as being the marker of a "reductive fallacy." Uma Narayan identifies this tendency as paving the ground for "gender essentialism" (2000, 80). Perhaps the worst effect of this essentialism has been the assimilation of the experiences and vocabularies of oppressed groups to that of privileged ones. With its concept of "global sisterhood," therefore, the only way in which a liberal feminist theoretical framework can yield a transnational ethical-political orientation is through overriding the importance of cultural, racial, and other differences between women. The reductive fallacy implicit in it thwarts its possibility of being a feminism crossing borders, which would be a decolonizing feminism at the same time. I will come back to the critique of liberal feminisms at various points of the dissertation.

As a way of redressing some of the problematic implications of liberal feminist theory, and especially its inherent gender essentialism, postcolonial feminist perspectives emphasize a politics of location. "Politics of location" renders visible the fact that gender always takes form within a particular material and symbolic space. Thus, we find a strong insistence on "group" identities in postcolonial contexts. Of course, the term "group" itself is a shape-shifter, being used to signify a varied range of things from cultural

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the central insights of traditional liberal feminism as well as the common objections against it from a postcolonial perspective.

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identity to religious, national, ethnic, and much more. In popular culture, it is not uncommon to find the term "cultural identity" being used as a synonym for "group identity." Again, in popular culture, the language of "group" and "culture" are sometimes found tied to the discourse of the "ethnic," the "indigenous," and the "local." Whatever the case may be, the fundamental postcolonial insight is foregrounding the differences between groups divided along cultural, religious, and other lines.

The problem, however, begins when postcolonial perspectives become tied to what Mohanty calls the "regressive politics of ethnic nationalism" (2003, 3). In such cases, a certain category, such as "Indian woman" is used as a counter-point to the essentialist category of "woman," but continues to ignore the voices of the marginalized in the category. It is no mystery to us that such regressive identity politics reaches alarming proportions when it finds itself in alliance with religious fundamentalisms. Often women's organizations, as parts of such groups, end up perpetuating this kind of exclusionary framework in their ethical-political visions. Such a politics fails to foster the fundamental values of tolerance and cooperation that are part and parcel of the vision of a pluralistic society. A major point of concern is that the vulnerability of women and violence against them increases dramatically in these sorts of situations. This context, therefore, poses a special challenge to any feminist theorist and activist.

I think that one of the fundamental problems with the kind of identity politics that is entailed by regressive nationalisms and religious fundamentalisms within postcolonial contexts is the monadic conception of "group" that they seem to require. This leads them to endorse a problematic view of cultural, racial, national, and other differences. The problem is rooted in a paradox in the framework for understanding "identity" within such

postcolonial contexts. In this case, the border between the individual and the community or group is rendered very fluid, so much so, that the individual is expected to embody and endorse all communal interests as a true member of that group. A certain form of communitarianism thus replaces liberal universalism. However, the paradox lies in the fact that the fluidity of the border between the individual and her group is ensured and safeguarded at the expense of reifying or freezing the borders between groups divided on the basis of culture, language, race, etc. The borders ensuring differences between groups, therefore, assume the form of rigid, unbridgeable barriers. Consequently, defining identities for any specific group in these versions of identity politics becomes primarily a matter of articulating a self-relation in terms of an internal essence, an internal telos, and so on. And of course, when postcolonial feminist perspectives take a rigid view of borders and differences, they can only yield a regressive pluralism and narrow identity politics.

The above understanding often frames our ways of thinking about "ethnicity" within popular culture, encompassing entities as diverse as fashion, art, food, and even places and peoples. The terms "ethnic" and "local" in popular culture are used, more often than not, to denote a set of attributes/descriptions in a rigid and static way. For instance, native Hawaiian feminist Haunani-Kay Trask (1999) points out that in the context of tourism, Hawaii and native Hawaiians get reduced to a set of descriptions in terms of rituals and cultural practices such as the performance of hula and the aloha spirit. Tourists look out for these authentic signifiers of the culture when they visit Hawaii. Desmond further notes the use of certain kinds of native bodies to represent authentic Hawaiianness, which are then assumed by the tourist to represent all Hawaiian bodies.

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The transition from the particular to the universal is predicated on a total denial of the relationship between "embodiment, enactment, and social identity" (Desmond 1997, 85). There is an amnesia on the part of the tourist about the fact that these bodies and embodied distinctions emerge within the context of a certain historical milieu. Desmond refers to this phenomenon as "a presumed ahistoricity of the body's materiality" (1997, 85).

Interestingly enough, sometimes groups themselves evoke such solipsistic notions of cultural identity for the purpose of self-definition. I find some ethnographic work done in the Indian feminist context very helpful for illustrating this point. Atreyee Sen, in her work on the Mahila Aghadi (the women's wing of the Shiv Sena, a fundamentalist political party dominant in the state of Maharashtra, India) outlines the ways in which the Sena created and mobilized on the basis of such neat identity categories as "Marathi" and "Maharashtrians" against "non-Maharashtrians." Sen's analysis of the category of "Marathi" as deployed by the Sena reveals that the definition of this identity category is intimately tied to an idealized conception of the "local." In fact, "Marathi identity" and "Marathi culture" is to be captured purely by looking into the realm of the "local." According to this definition, only a "Marathi" could be "local" while somebody living in Mumbai for a prolonged period of time is somehow excluded from the "local." Hence, a distinction is maintained between "Marathi" and "Mumbaikar" (somebody living in Mumbai). (Sen 2006, 19) This is a paradigmatic instance of equating group identity with cultural identity that is defined through the lens of the local and the indigenous, and vice versa.

Over the past few years, and following its alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the Sena has been increasingly turning towards "Hindutva" from "Marathi-ism." It is interesting to note that both the politics based on "Maharashtrian-ism" and the one based on "Hindutva" share a common thread. The belief is that these concepts can be resurrected from *within the culture.* In the latter case, for instance, the assumption is that a pure notion of "Hindutva" is there, and can be recuperated if one tries hard enough, and looks deeply enough within "Indian culture" (equated in this case, with "Hindu culture"). The point I want to emphasize through the use of these examples is that the identity-categories are construed primarily in a self-referential vein. Such self-referential definitions are the outcome of conceiving "groups" as closed units that are monadic in character. Rigid borders stipulate rigid divides between insiders and outsiders. It is no surprise that the resulting schema for identity politics manifests such solipsistic and exclusionary tendencies. In fact, Sen goes on to claim that

> [o]ne of the reasons for forming the Aghadi was to permanently mark Hindu women as distinct from Muslim women. Sena women were not just keen to unite women against Muslim men, but also use their militancy, their mobility and their organization to magnify their differences with Muslim women. This was a conscious ploy to institutionalize their *nayi azadi* ("new-found freedom") as a cultural prerogative of Hindu women. Hence, it remained in keeping with the cause of Hindutva. (2006, 28)

Countless examples of religious fundamentalisms and regressive nationalisms of this kind continue to plague our current landscape.

Uma Narayan voices some other concerns regarding regressive postcolonial politics in her essay, "Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism." Her critique complements my analysis. Narayan mentions that she is sympathetic to the feminist perspectives that reiterate national and cultural

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differences or diversity in order to counter gender essentialism. However, she is weary of

the kind of regressive postcolonial feminist politics that end up embracing "cultural

essentialism." (Narayan 2000, 81) Narayan's critical category of "cultural essentialism"

is useful for discerning several problematic aspects of this particular alternative to a

politics of sameness. Describing "cultural essentialism," Narayan writes,

> Seemingly *universal* essentialist generalizations about "all women" are replaced
> by *culture-specific* essentialist generalizations that depend on totalizing categories
> such as "Western culture," "Non-western cultures," "Western women," "Third
> World women," and so forth. (2000, 81).

Her claim is that, although group-specific identities are invoked in postcolonial contexts

to acknowledge the diversity in women's experiences, going on to embrace essentialist

views of "culture" runs into a difficulty. This essentialism entails de-historicizing and de-

politicizing culture, and freezing it in space and time. This is precisely what happens in

case of the definition of "Hawaiianness" that Trask and Desmond critique, and the way in

which "Hindutva" seems to be construed by the Sena.

Cultural essentialism, interestingly enough, shares similar attributes with gender

essentialism according to Narayan. Both assume that discourses about "difference" are

"prediscursively 'real' " (Narayan 2000, 82). As a consequence, we are theoretically led

to acknowledge radical and irresolvable incommensurability between cultures. This also

creates the perfect conditions for cultural relativism since cultures, on this view, lack a

common standard. Cultural relativism has been considered by some feminists to be a

remedy to the imperialism perpetuated by an assumption of "sameness" on the part of

gender essentialists. However, I agree with Narayan that insistence on "difference" (and

cultural relativism) has the potential to perpetuate some of the same imperialistic

tendencies[5] as narratives based on "sameness," depending on the way in which they are deployed.

Two: Critical Reflections on the Contemporary Landscape and a Roadmap of My Project

Increase in regressive identity politics in contemporary times based on religion, ethnicity, culture, etc. often leads to a disillusionment with identity politics in general. This is especially characteristic of the liberal critique of the postcolonial impetus to place the specificity of identities at the center of ethical and political projects. Contemporary liberal feminists such as Martha Nussbaum and Susan Moller Okin believe that communitarianism and idealization of culture harms women much more than it benefits them. Historical instances abound of women being deprived of agency on the grounds of preserving culture, community, and family. Nussbaum writes, "women have too rarely been treated as ends in themselves, and too frequently treated as means to the ends of others. … Women have very often been treated as parts of a larger unit… and valued primarily for their contribution as reproducers and caregivers rather than as sources of agency and worth in their own right." (2005, 551).[6] The concern about cultural repression and repression within other large units, such as the family, is an important concern for feminist purposes. It cautions us against uncritically adopting a communitarian ontological-political framework of analysis simply on the basis of its relational component. After all, as Nussbaum points out, "… each feels pain in his or her own body, that the food given to A does not arrive in the stomach of B." (2005, 550). I think that the

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[5] For a detailed description of this critique, see Narayan's essay, "Essence of Culture and a Sense of History: A Feminist Critique of Cultural Essentialism."

[6] Also see Okin's essay, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?"

goal of equality implicit in the liberal tradition, along with its call to maintain individual integrity does carry weight for feminist purposes.

The shortcoming of liberal feminism as I see it, however, is to let the concern for individuality lapse into an individualism that overlooks connectedness and group membership as crucial aspects of human existence. Nussbaum categorically states, "The central question of politics should not be, How is the organic whole doing?, but rather, How are X and Y and Z and Q doing?" (2005, 550). Her observation seems to assume a clear disjunct between the individual human agent and the larger wholes with which she identifies and/or operates as a part of. Consequently, the complex interplay between an individual and the larger organic whole in which she is embedded does not gain any ethical-political significance. Moreover, Nussbaum's move from cultural repression to the conclusion that identity politics is necessarily regressive seems too hasty. It ignores the political movements based on identities that have been a survival strategy for many, and perhaps the only available way of transforming oppressive structures. I will come back to some of these concerns in chapter III, when I discuss Nussbaum and Appiah's cosmopolitanism as a basis for thinking about "transnationalism."

For the purposes of my project, I would like to maintain a distinction between "individuality" and "individualism." I identify the chief concern of "individuality" as being one of preserving the health of any individual agent, so that she is not engulfed by a larger whole. I define "individualism," on the contrary, as the tendency to freeze the line separating the two. Individualism results in an overly bounded picture of the individual.[7]

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[7] This kind of concern seems to guide care ethicists' concerns with liberalism as well. Eva Feder Kittay, for instance, proposes a distinction between "*individual-based* equality" and "*connection-based* equality." (1999, 28) While noting this resonance, I will come back to lay out some basic differences between the framework I develop in this dissertation and the care ethics model for thinking about ethical situations in

The framework of analysis I develop for thinking about transnational feminism is focused on maintaining the integrity of individual agents, without lapsing into the individualism of the liberal paradigm in the process. Again, the basic problem of the postcolonial landscape as I see it, is not identity politics per se, but some of the ways in which we tend to envision, practice, and approach it. There is no doubt that identities can turn out to be oppressive in the life of an individual, and a matter of external imposition for many. But it would be dangerous to dismiss culturally situated identity politics, especially in light of the bleak history of cultural imperialism of which feminists themselves have sometimes been a part.

A fundamental characteristic of the regressive versions of identity politics is that whatever exists at the border, or outside the confines of the particular group is not engaged in framing an understanding of the group's own identity. Since the definition of the entity in question is construed self-referentially, the group ends up taking the form of an overly bounded individual. By projecting the inside as a self-sufficient system, this paradigm gives birth to an internal ethical narcissism that makes the question of "ought" redundant within a group. Group individualism neglects the creative and liberatory dimensions of borders. Moreover, a rigid wall of separation is instituted between the "inside" and the "outside" of an entity. Viewed in this way, borders become primarily dividing barriers, and ways of defining as Anzaldúa points out, "… the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish *us* from *them*." (1999, 25). The language of "us" versus

Chapter IV. These differences are not intended to overturn care ethics per se, but to highlight certain inadequacies in the care ethics perspective as an approach to transnational or global feminist ethics. In fact, the ethics of humility I propose toward the end of that chapter, can potentially sharpen and channelize praxes of care in better ways. Finally, the kind of ontology I articulate is not only a relational one, but an intentional one at the same time. The latter has specific implications for questions about individuality and individuation, and will become clearer in Chapter III.

"them" functions descriptively in the popular imaginary as a means of radical othering. Normatively, it serves as a foundation for denying the integrity of the "other," of positioning them as threats, ultimately disengaging from them ethically, and removing any basis for even arguing for ethical engagements. And, of course, it does not take long for this attitude to manifest in rigid dichotomies as between "local/regional" versus the "global," "center" versus "periphery," and so on. The Sena example also exposes the ways in which group sentiments, that feed the local/global and insider/outsider dichotomies get manipulated by a privileged few, who have ultimate control over their connotation and denotation.

The regressive paradigm of postcolonial politics generates yet another obstacle on the route to multicultural transnational feminisms. It yields a dichotomy between a multicultural identity-based politics and a transnational politics cutting across differences. When we approach borders as rigid, unbridgeable barriers, then we are committed to think of border crossings and transnationalism as being only possible when the uniqueness of individual group identities is sacrificed. In such cases, political mobilization on the basis of identities demands the kind of loyalty that can only be achieved by freezing the borders of one's group. A loyalty developed through these means becomes a fertile ground for aggressive communitarianism, which ends up making the group in question supreme, pure, static, and beyond the possibility of critique.[8] Furthermore, borders end up signifying danger and, more importantly, the threat of contamination. Hence, there is an intense urge to prevent infiltration of whatever lies

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[8] Contemporary Islamic feminist Maysam J. Al-Faruqi, makes a similar point when she talks about how some perspectives from "within" the faith often lay the blame for various problems faced by Muslim women on external abuses of the faith, or tend to obscure these by justifying these differences and inequalities religiously. (2000, 72) I will come back to Al-Faruqi's claims in Chapter V.

outside. Exclusionary and regressive identity politics, therefore, gains life from this logical understanding of borders. And, once we view groups as self-contained wholes that are strictly separated out from other self-contained wholes, then the only pluralism possible would be an atomistic one. Regressive perspectives in their zeal to reify and police borders, therefore, end up losing the very idea of cross-border or transnational "solidarity." As such it fails to address concerns related to border crossings – concerns that are everyday realities to so many women in the globalizing world today.

The first part of my project seeks to undo the above conception of "group identity" and the kind of identity politics that gets its life from such conceptions of "identity." By doing so, I aim to open up a space for preserving the integrity of individual groups as socio-political-cultural units and sites of localized struggles in a way that does not make them completely incommensurable and jeopardize communication. With this aim in mind, I articulate an alternative logic of borders. How "difference" or "otherness" is conceptualized matters as much as the borders that divide them. We can get radically different frameworks for both identity politics and multiculturalism based on the kind of perspective we adopt in relation to the question of "borders" and "difference." For a postcolonial feminist politics that is truly also decolonizing, we need an alternative conception of "borders" and "difference" that is free from both gender essentialism and cultural essentialism. Based on a nuanced understanding of "borders," "differences," and "individuality," we can then arrive at a more adequate and useful picture of "transnationalism."

I start developing an alternative logic of borders by looking at the process through which an identity takes shape in an individual's life and the factors impacting it. I argue

that an individual's identity takes shape in and through the complex workings of various borders ranging from the intra-subjective to the inter-subjective and beyond. By foregrounding the centrality of borders in the lives of an individual, I argue for the complex intertwining of questions about individual identity with ones about otherness and differences. Beginning with a Beauvorian existential model of analysis of identity in Chapter II, I argue against an overly bound, an overly unbound, and an overly uprooted conception of "identity." I discuss the last one with reference to the postmodern conception of nomadic subjectivity. In Chapter III, I move on to a pragmatist logical-ontological frame inspired by Royce and Follett's work. This allows me to enrich my perspective on "individuality" and to move beyond the inter-subjective and understand its larger context. The picture of individuality that I develop allows it to be dynamic without being uprooted and rooted without being overly bounded. We gain a better perspective on individual human agents as well as on groups as political units, and the relation between the two. Bringing the phenomenological into conversation with the ontological and the logical enables me to argue for the ambiguous character of borders from different angles. I claim that this orientation toward borders, in turn, can effectively counter the rigid binary frame of analysis upheld by regressive postcolonial identity politics. It is one that can reorient our perspective on "group identity" so that we can derive a dynamic identity politics without lapsing into cultural essentialism on the one hand and are able to establish bases for transnational praxis without embracing gender essentialism on the other. I demonstrate the ways in which the new logical-ontological framework of borders allows us to theorize transnational space and transnational identities in a way that accommodates and celebrates a pluralistic multicultural society at the same time. It

yields, what I call, an ontology of "interactive plurality" that carries with it a radical vision of ethical-political praxis. This ontology is contrasted with another approach to transnationalism, transnational identities, and transnational ethics that has become immensely popular. This approach is "cosmopolitanism, " which I critique in the chapter, and in contrast to which I judge the strength of my own framework.

The second part of my project focuses on the concept of "solidarity." My aim is to offer a revised basis for thinking about it in light of the ontology developed so far, as well as to develop more concrete tools for enabling its praxis. I begin Chapter IV with critically analyzing the liberal understanding of "solidarity" in terms of "sisterhood." I identify a key moment in the liberal understanding of "solidarity" as being its intimate tie with a liberal understanding of "reciprocity." This connection is not only particularly worrisome to postcolonial feminists, but has evoked strong criticism from feminist care ethics (another dominant tradition in contemporary feminist ethics). In light of her famous "dependency critique" of the liberal notion of "reciprocity," care ethicist Eva Feder Kittay asks us to shift the focus of moral gravity to non-reciprocal relations. The care ethics tradition has become a dominant paradigm for thinking about feminist ethics, politics, and global justice in academic contexts of the West. While recognizing the problems that Kittay points out with a liberal take on "reciprocity," I articulate several concerns with starting with Kittay's own alternative. I argue that from a transnational feminist perspective it is particularly problematic to make non-reciprocity the primary site of moral meaning. Starting with Beauvoir, I then work out an alternative paradigm for thinking about "reciprocity" based on the phenomenological concept of "ambiguity" and then trace out its efficacy as a revised basis for thinking about "solidarity." I argue

that "reciprocity" reformulated in light of the concept of ambiguity not only accommodates Kittay's concerns, but is also more effective in dealing with the problems arising from making care ethics alone the paradigm for transnational feminist ethics. I trace its potential to start yielding what I term an "ethics of humility."

I begin Chapter V by offering a specific formulation of the problem of "solidarity" that can help us to better understand what is at stake in the concept. I reformulate the problem of solidarity as being a problem of boundaries. I then trace out the problematic implications of some popular ways of negotiating boundaries that have characterized or tend to characterize various feminist projects of building solidarity. I then bring Follett into the conversation and build on her concept of "integration." I argue that integration resolves the boundary problem more successfully and is a more effective and sensitive way of dealing with differences and conflict. I conclude by reflecting on how integration is not only an effective method for actualizing solidarity, but also offers valuable insight into what is involved in any decolonizing practice of "solidarity." Integration can add significantly to the "critical" component that I emphasized as part of a responsible transnational ethical praxis, and to an ethics of humility. My analysis in chapters IV and V yields resources for thinking about some other crucial concepts in a feminist context, such as "agency," "power," and "empowerment."

The chief motivation behind my project to develop a critical multicultural transnational feminism is an awareness of certain real-life issues confronting women in the globalized world of today. As global capitalism manifests itself in the form of novel industries and creates new circuits of movement, more and more women everyday come into its fold. Transnational surrogacy as part of the international industry in reproductive

tourism is one such industry that circulates through women's bodies, travels across

borders, and embodies several ethical and political quandaries of globalization.

Transnational surrogacy is a practice in which a woman, typically from a wealthy nation,

"rents the womb" of a poor woman in a developing nation to carry her child. The so-

called "First World nations" are mostly consumers of this kind of tourism, while

"developing nations" or the "Third World"[9] are the service providers.

Transnational surrogacy is a paradigmatic instance of the challenge of

incommensurability, as encountered in coalition-building. This is due to the fact that

surrogacy of this kind embodies power hierarchies between women. It also raises the

specter of a host of other factors such as class, nationality, race-relations, economic

relations between nations, and so forth in addition to gender. Hence, transnational

surrogacy provides an interesting testing ground for the kind of theoretical exercise I

undertake. Any resource for future feminism must be able to make headway into a

complicated issue such as this. The final chapter of the project, reconceptualizes various

problems and dilemmas around transnational surrogacy by using resources from the

feminist pragmatic phenomenology developed in the dissertation.

I do not claim that women's experiences of globalization in all cases resemble

transnational surrogacy. While the reproductive tourism industry severely limits the

movement of transnational surrogates, the global economy forces other groups of women

from the developing world to migrate to the global north in search of a livelihood. A

number of women, for instance, arrive in the United States to work as nannies and care-

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[9] I use terms like "First World", "Third World", "developed" and "developing" in quotes since I agree with the view of several postcolonial feminists and feminists of color such as Chandra Mohanty that it is important to attend to the genealogy of these terms. These get sedimented within a particular material and symbolic space, that must be attended to if we are to grasp their meanings and significance.

workers. Surrogates and care-workers, in turn, find themselves implicated within the flow of global capital and discourses of transnational motherhood in different ways. However, what I hope to expose through my analysis of transnational surrogacy is that a pragmatically oriented and phenomenologically based feminist analytical-normative paradigm can supply us with new footholds for making sense of some of these phenomena relating to women and globalization.

The project of envisioning solidarity across varied and multiple positionalities is at once complicated and risky. There is no guarantee of success, and disengaging and radical othering are sometimes necessary to ensure survival, prevent too much external interference, and resist cultural imperialism. Therefore, I do not want to condemn outright or condone any unwillingness to evolve a collective "we." Given my own experience of crossing national, cultural, linguistic, and other borders, I also do not intend to downplay the fact that borders can take on negative, reifying, and violent connotations in the context of actual border-crossings. My other voice, however, recognizes the need for engagement whenever this is possible or viable. Therefore, when I stress the creativity of borders, I do not want to make generalized judgments about whether they are positive or negative. In fact, I spend significant time on the direction of crossing over and its implications for the question of "power." What I intend to challenge through my analysis, however, are tendencies to disregard the potential of borders in discourses of "identity," "transnationality," and "solidarity across borders." I hope that my analysis is able to answer when and why crossing borders and evolving a collective "we" can sometimes be problematic, while harnessing new resources for thinking about solidarity whenever possible in an increasing number of contexts. Deepening our understanding of both the

oppressive and liberatory potentials of borders, increases our chances of successfully

negotiating these, so as to maximize their liberatory potential. After all, as Anzaldúa so

poignantly reminds us,

> Earthquake country, these feminisms. Like a fracture in the Earth's crust splitting
> rock, like a splitting rock itself, the quakes shift different categories of women
> past each other so that we cease to match, and are forever disaligned – colored
> from white, Jewish from colored, lesbian from straight. If we indeed do not have
> one common ground but only shifting plots, how can we work and live and love
> together? Then too, let us not forget *la mierda* between us, a mountain of *caca*
> that keeps us from "seeing" each other, being with each other. (1990, 217)

CHAPTER II

TOWARDS A NEW ONTOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK FOR

THEORIZING IDENTITY, ALTERITY, AND BORDERS:

FEMINIST PHENOMENOLOGICAL INSIGHTS

My concern about individualism within the liberal feminist paradigm exposes an internal contradiction within the liberal paradigm. On the one hand, liberal feminists take the individual autonomous human agent as the unit of political discourse. This kind of individualism entails the institution of strict borders between the self and the other, the individual human agent and the larger wholes that she operates as a part of, etc. On the other hand, as borders (cultural, racial, national, etc.) almost become barriers to any discourse of the liberation of this liberal self, the tendency is to focus on similarities across differences at the expense of differences. The model of subjectivity emergent in the liberal scheme, therefore, is overly bounded from one angle and overly unbounded from another angle at the same time.

It is, however, problematic to consider regressive identity politics to be a satisfying response to this contradiction. Identity politics, unlike liberal politics, recognizes the connection between individual human agents and the larger group life they emerge as a part of. Their uncritical embrace of cultural essentialism, however, pushes them to render the border between the individual and the community fluid only at the expense of reifying borders between different groups. It is no surprise that the primary route to defining group identity categories in these versions of identity politics becomes a matter of articulating a self-relation in terms of an internal essence or an internal telos. In

this case, whatever exists at the border or outside the confines of the particular interiority is not engaged in framing an understanding of the "inside." Thus, both the creative and the liberatory dimensions of the border space are once again overlooked. An overly bounded or monadic conception of "group identity" paves the way for a new kind of individualism - the "single individual" of the liberal tradition is now simply substituted by the concept of a "group as individual unit." As a result, the agency of individual agents drowns in the sea of the larger group life. It is no surprise that identity politics operating with "group" as its basic unit, conceived along these lines, culminates in an atomistic kind of political pluralism. It fails to capture complex phenomenologies of crossing borders and the possibility of living out an identity from multiple positions. In fact, whether it can even allow for the possibility of being open to, and engaging with the other while being true to one's roots, is open to debate. Rootedness almost becomes an iron chain.

I consider the common point in all the above-mentioned feminist ethical-political paradigms to be that the concepts of "identity," "border," and "alterity/otherness/difference" appear to be neatly separated from each other. It appears as though the identity of a unit or what constitutes its "inside" can be perfectly captured without bringing it into dialogue with the border that separates it from what is outside it, and without reference to the nature of the latter. I find this perspective problematic for both feminist theory and praxis in an increasingly globalized world for at least three reasons. First, this particular logical frame for understanding borders fails to do justice to the complex lived experience of women within the context of globalization whose very identities are tied to the existence of borders. This is clear especially when we look at the

experiences of women crossing borders as part of the global movement of capital, those

working for transnational corporations, and those whose lives are intimately tied to the

contemporary phenomenon of "outsourcing." I will expand on this further while

analyzing the phenomenon of transnational surrogacy in the last chapter. The second

reason is that the creative capacity and the ambiguous character of the border (in both its

oppressive and liberatory dimensions) is, for the most part, overlooked - something that

some feminists of color have tried to draw to our attention through concepts such as

"mestiza consciousness" (Anzaldúa, 1999). Finally, the neat separation of identity,

alterity, and border from each other manifests a tendency to view any sort of

transnational discourse and identity politics as necessarily being an either-or binary. The

expectation is that you can either embrace a transnational feminist perspective (which

would mean sacrificing or disregarding the importance of borders and differences in

favor of a border-less category such as a "global sisterhood"), or be loyal to identity

politics (which would mean having a rigid view of "border" and leaving the

outside/alterity out of discourses on identity), but not both together. A "transnational

multicultural feminist," therefore, appears to be a contradiction in terms. All these

reiterate the need for richer frameworks for theorizing "identity," "alterity/difference,"

and "border" at the phenomenological, logical, and ontological levels – a framework that

works against both overly bounded and overly unbounded notions of "identity," if we are

to envision a critical multicultural transnational feminism. As feminists, we need to

search for a model of understanding self-other relations that can ensure the solidity of

identity along with its fluidity at the same time, thus, providing us with an alternative

logic for approaching the question of borders in a transnational world.

I would like to note at this point, that the concept of "border" is not a simple concept. Borders range from the psychic, emotional, and other borders within oneself to the inter-subjective, inter-cultural, inter-racial, geographic, and various other material-symbolic spaces. I acknowledge that these different kinds of borders can demand very different frames of analyses. Moreover, their nature is influenced by individual experiences, actions, and identities. While having no intention of conflating all these different sorts of borders, I think, however, that our approach to these multiple borders is influenced significantly by the specific framework that we consciously or unconsciously adopt towards understanding the relation between the inside and outside of an entity, that is, by how we construe its individuality relative to whatever is outside it and the space that marks its separation from the outside. Although the question of physical, tangible space becomes important to some sorts of borders such as inter-regional or inter-national in a way that it is not for some others; "borders" in general gesture towards the existence of a certain gap, a break, a certain "betweenness."[10] The project I undertake in the next two chapters is to expose the centrality and complex workings of various borders (intra-subjective, inter-subjective, and beyond) in the living out of an individual identity. Through this model, I argue that questions about identity, alterity, and border are critically entangled. The relation between them should not, and indeed, cannot be ignored. In this chapter, however, I limit my analysis to the existential phenomenological

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[10] I will develop a reading of "borders" as "betweenness" and outline a specific logical-ontological conceptualization of the "betweenness" relation inspired by philosophical pragmatism in the next chapter. The point I want to emphasize here is that different kinds of borders, while having different features and descriptions, seem to share this character of "betweenness" in so far as they signify some sort of break – some sort of line of separation. They are not just physically located between things but that location serves as the logical marker of difference, break, and so on. In the next chapter, I develop further, a reading of this "betweenness" as "discontinuity" rather than "division." I theorize the resulting "difference" along these lines, and outline the advantages of this way of approaching borders for a transnational multicultural feminist praxis. For now, I just want to draw our attention to both the position and the function of borders.

resources I bring to bear on the question, and focus in particular on some intra-subjective and inter-subjective borders that we encounter in living out an identity.

As a first step towards developing an alternative paradigm for understanding "identity," "alterity," and "border," I articulate some key insights on "identity" entailed by an "ek-static" conception of the self in Section One. I add to this discussion of "identity" by analyzing the concept of "situation, as it appears in Beauvoir's phenomenology. In Section Two, I engage the postmodern feminist conception of the nomadic subject, that is introduced into feminist theory by Rossi Braidotti. I argue that, while trying to overcome the problem of an overly bounded individual, this perspective ends up positing an unanchored subject. I claim that this alternative fails for global feminist reasons when compared to a phenomenologically grounded approach. The latter is able to affirm both the definite and porous nature of borders. In Section Three, I theorize "alterity" in relation to "identity" by interrogating further the nature of "ek-stasis." I argue in favor of a certain perspective on alterity that is entailed by understanding "identity" in terms of "ambiguity." [11] I argue that this particular phenomenological approach to the question of identity is able to place dis-identification and alterity at the heart of articulating and living out an identity. This challenges the idea that borders are uncreative barriers and inconsequential for defining the life of the inside. I am aware of the vast scope of the philosophical tradition of existential phenomenology

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[11] In Chapter IV, I go back to the concept of "ambiguity" again, but to outline a specific phenomenology of agency, and to deploy it for rethinking "reciprocity." In this chapter, however, I take it up in the context of thinking about fuzzy character of various borders, emerging in our lived experience.

relevant to this issue. However, in my analysis, the primary influence from within the phenomenological tradition is the work of Simone de Beauvoir.[12]

One: "Identity" as "Ek-stasis"

I begin with an existential phenomenological framework of analysis, mainly inspired by Beauvoir, because of its focus on lived experience and its commitment to a materialist-political analysis of experience.[13] I consider the primary value of approaching transnational identities from existential phenomenology to be that it becomes possible to theorize identity in the context of human action, by foregrounding the conscious and intentional body,[14] and by grappling with the multiple and complex layers of embodied existence.

A fundamental characteristic of the self-as-experienced, highlighted by various phenomenologists and existentialist philosophers, is its perpetual "nothingness." It is an understanding of self-identity not in terms of fixed essences and definitions, but rather, as

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[12] In the dominant feminist literature, time and again, Beauvoir has been dismissed as a typical white liberal feminist whose reflections focus on a specific group of women but then get generalized to other cultural groups. Moreover, she is alleged to not have acknowledged the intersection of different identities as raced, sexed, etc. even in the life of a single individual. Elizabeth Spelman's critique is very powerful in this respect. In fact, Margaret Simons too brings the charge of "ethnocentrism" against Beauvoir's perspective. However, I agree with Penelope Deutscher when she says that although it might be true that some of these observations escaped Beauvoir, the richness of her framework along with concepts like "ambiguity" can provide us with valuable resources for feminist liberatory projects. I argue that some aspects of her method can be deployed fruitfully within postcolonial and transnational feminist contexts, but of course, need to be sharpened, and perhaps, even taken to new directions given the realities of the context. As a decolonial transnational feminist, I start with some of these resources and ultimately, attempt to sharpen and transform these further in the course of application to real concrete bodies that are sexed, raced, and so on. In other words, rereading Beauvoir in conjunction with postcolonial and transnational feminists of color can help us further develop and enrich some of the theoretical tools that a Beauvoirian phenomenology has to offer us.

[13] In Chapter VI, I will provide a detailed analysis of the benefits of this particular approach towards ethical-political questions. In this chapter, however, I focus on developing some of the specific phenomenological concepts that I find helpful for developing an account of "identity".

[14] Of course, the focus on the body and not just consciousness in any simple or non-embodied sense as the site of intentionality is particularly pronounced in the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty and Beauvoir. However, since I draw inspiration particularly from Beauvoir in this context, I emphasize the embodied foundation of consciousness, the body as a site of intentionality, and action being the actualization of a project by the body in situation. This will become clearer with the analysis of "situation" in the course of the chapter.

a coming-to-be. This understanding is facilitated by an "ek-static" conception of the self.

An important part of my project for theorizing identity in this section will, therefore,

center on developing the ontological underpinnings of the concepts of "self" and

"situation" to highlight the importance of the border in any account of identity (whether

at the personal level or inter-personal level).

"Ek-stasis," a concept revitalized for phenomenology by Heidegger, signifies an

excess in our consciousness in the sense of "being outside of ourselves," or "transcending

ourselves" at any given moment of existing.[15] "Transcendence" is another way of

capturing the ek-static nature of the self as a perpetual moving beyond the directly given,

beyond that which "is" at the moment. Ek-stasis as built into the very structure of the self

is expressed at various sites. First, it is manifested in time-consciousness. One's existence

always seems to overflow the past and present onto an open future. This leads Sartre to

characterize "consciousness" or the "for-itself" as "… the being which determines itself

to exist inasmuch as it can not coincide with itself." (1992, 125-6) Ek-stasis as manifested

in the temporality of the self is the experience of being at a distance from oneself at any

given moment of existing. Hence, one can never be reduced to what she is at the

moment.[16] As one act is completed, we move on to the next one – there is no rest, no

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[15] For further reference on Heidegger's specific use of the term, see footnote on p. 377 of *Being and Time* (1962, 377). It must be noted that the sites and the forms of manifestation of ekstasis change in the work of different phenomenologists, some of which will become clearer in subsequent analysis. In Heidegger, for instance, Mitsein or being-with can function as a site of ekstasis at an ontological level in a way in which it cannot in Sartre (see Bauer 2006, 68). However, my project is not as much focused on an internal critique of the phenomenological tradition, as on developing a thick notion of identity for transnational feminism by working from multiple locations that I inhabit in different traditions. Hence, I focus mainly on some key moments or aspects of ekstasis that are relevant to the project at hand, and seem to recur in various texts and thinkers.

[16] Of course, Sartre seems to maintain a distinction between consciousness or the real self as pure for-itself (characterized by the indestructible power of negating/nihilating the given), and the self as contextualized subject within a certain history in the bulk of his early work. The former is always present as an excess to

hope of respite. This explains the contempt for "paradise" and an acute insistence on action in existential phenomenology. Beauvoir, for instance, writes in "Pyrrhus and Cineas," "Paradise is rest… a state of things that is given and does not have to be surpassed. … The beauty of the promised land is that it promised new promises. Immobile paradises promise us nothing but an eternal ennui." (2004, 98) Existential anxiety, fear, anticipation, urgency of decision, etc. are, therefore, our perpetual companions and part and parcel of being human. As one destination becomes the starting-point of a new journey, the self itself becomes a project to be made and remade endlessly through this journey. Future-orientedness is built into the very structure of experience, and is a crucial element in enabling transcendence, that is, going beyond momentary existence (also understood as "facticity" or "immanence.")

The future-orientedness of the self finds expression in, and is actualized through projects that are rooted in the world. Identity, therefore, becomes a constant process and not a given fact that simply unfolds through the course of a life. This experience of subjectivity is of being thoroughly embodied.[17] The connection between action and project enables us to think of identity itself as an active project – a task of becoming, that

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the latter. The claim that one never coincides with oneself can be read as foregrounding this distinction. In fact, the distinction enables Sartre to retain a notion of radical freedom in *Being and Nothingness* such that the effect of the gaze of the other and inter-subjective exchange seem to impact one layer of selfhood and can be potentially averted by the other. A Beauvorian phenomenology would differ substantially from Sartre on this count. Although this difference will be spelled out at more length in Section Three of the chapter, here I want to focus on the way in which the excess or the ek-static character of the self draws our attention towards the temporal structure of subjectivity, and consequently, to a crucial aspect of identity.

[17] In emphasizing the body in phenomenology, characterizing subjectivity as embodied, and theorizing "freedom" by taking this aspect of human existence very seriously, Beauvoir appears to be philosophically closer to Merleau-Ponty than to thinkers such as Husserl and Sartre in the phenomenological tradition.
    I also discuss in some of the following paragraphs how "situation" as a part of Beauvoir's theoretical method, helps to sharpen the phenomenological method politically. Incidentally, this political dimension is often considered to be lacking in the classical phenomenology of Husserl with his emphasis on bracketing the natural world as part of the phenomenological reduction and his search for the foundational structures of consciousness.

is, in a word, a site of constant negotiation. We go back to the past and constantly look into the future to create meaning and justify or condemn actions in the present. This is beautifully captured in Beauvoir's picture of the self and freedom that she sketches in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. She writes,

> One escapes the absurdity of the clinamen only by escaping the absurdity of the pure moment. An existence would be unable to found itself if moment by moment it crumbled into nothingness. … If I leave behind an act which I have accomplished, it becomes a thing by falling into the past. … I must ceaselessly return to it and justify it in the unity of the project in which I am engaged. (1976, 26-7)

Our embodied existence demands our exceeding ourselves in creating our identities.

I think that this account points us towards an important ontological characteristic of "identity." We recognize that although we might sometimes need to capture the identity of an entity within definitions for practical and strategic purposes, definitions can only be time-and-space-specific. Moreover, manifestation of temporal order and the literal mapping of an identity is predicated, among other things, on the interrelatedness and interactions between our past, present, and future selves. This brings to light the presence of various borders existing even within ourselves. It points towards the multi-layered nature of personal identity or individuality, the heterogeneity in the life of the "inside," along with the importance of differentiation and discrimination in the very process of living out an identity and establishing a self-relation.

The inevitable excess in identity at any given moment points to the fact that we are always already rooted in a situation. Indeed, *"situation,"* as denoting this material and symbolic space in which the self always finds itself implicated and identity emerges, gains recognition as a distinct and philosophically important concept in Beauvoir's phenomenological framework. One of the things that makes human experience unique is

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the constant tension experienced between our power to make the world through our actions and the limitations that we must inevitably encounter as embodied beings inhabiting a world with others.[18] The particularity of the project is greatly impacted by its context. Thus, "situation" becomes key to understanding the horizon and range of possibilities for action and, consequently, of identity. Individual identity, therefore, becomes intimately connected to the group life – to the material-symbolic space of its emergence.

"Situation" as a phenomenological concept includes a range of things including one's body, others, the material context, history, norms, and so on that deeply structure consciousness and subjectivity. No bodily experience as part of one's "situation" is simply an accidental fact. It is politically significant in determining what we are and how we are looked at. The centrality of embodiment and materiality helps us to explain the ways in which our flesh - the color of our skin, bodily gestures, modes of speaking, etc., play a key role in the constructions and experiences of identities. "Situation" as a theoretical concept reiterates the fact that an identity is always time-space-and-context-specific, that is, they are deeply historical and political.

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[18] Andrea Veltman, in fact, in her essay "Transcendence and Immanence in the Ethics of Simone de Beauvoir", considers the focus on world-making and creativity to be the at the heart of a Beauvorian account of "transcendence" while immanence is tied to negative labor or labor for the sheer perpetuation of existence. This marks off Beauvoir, according to her, as unique such that these concepts cannot be said to map neatly onto Sartre's distinction between the for-itself and the in-itself even in her early work such as "Pyrrhus and Cineas". Of course, transcendence as constructive activity and world-making has traces of the Heideggerean and Sartrean notion of "project" according to Veltman. But she points out that the distinction between constructive action and passive enjoyment of life is absent in a Heideggerean notion of "project" and Sartre's notion of "transcendence." (Veltman 2006, 117) She also notes that Beauvoir takes "immanence" as a counterpart of "transcendence" in *The Second Sex*. (Veltman 2006, 119). Her essay is a good source for tracing the geneology of these terms in Beauvoir's philosophy.

While discussing the stereotypes historically associated with one's identity as a "woman," for instance, Beauvoir writes in the chapter on "Women's Situation and Character"

> There is some truth in all these affirmations. But the types of behaviors denounced are not dictated to woman by her hormones or predestined in her brains compartments: they are suggested in negative form by her situation. (2010, 638)

The concept of "situation" is used by Beauvoir to trouble the idea of the "eternal feminine" as a pre-given, changeless, a-historical, and a-cultural entity. This idea is nothing more than a myth, which paradoxically, emerges within the concrete historical context of a patriarchal society that normalizes gendered power-hierarchies. In other words, the "eternal feminine" as an identity category must be construed "… in her economic, social, and historical conditioning as a whole." (Beauvoir 2010, 638) Beauvoir's analysis of the process of becoming a woman from childhood through adolescence in and through various institutions such as marriage, maternity, and so on, concretizes the dynamic nature of "situation" and its role in the constitution of individual feminine subjectivity as well as in the constitution of the identity category. This leads her to eventually claim that "the woman" in general is an empty category, just as the category of "the eternal man." (2010, 663-4) Moreover, as she poignantly observes, the existence, importance, and position of the category of "man" is rendered coherent only in terms of its opposition to the category of "woman" along with the subsequent devaluation of the latter as the "other."[19] This exposes the fact that a group or collective identity is itself a

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[19] Current theoretical concepts such as "creating difference" (Lorber 2010, 66), "politics of representation" (Rosemarie Garland Thomson 2010, 230), etc. seem to talk about the same problem. The problem seems to be one of differential evaluation where difference is infused with a political meaning such that certain bodies, categories, etc. become marked in negative ways in order to successfully maintain and perpetuate existing hegemonies/inequalities, and render invisible any privilege or oppression associated with the latter.

movement based on various material and symbolic realities, that is, on the intricacies of its "situation" and borders that the "situation" stipulates.[20]

In light of the above, I think that the phenomenological concept of "situation" captures the fact that even as we speak of transcending the borders within (for instance, surpassing the present towards the future), we are also engaged in transcending and negotiating various borders without (for instance, surpassing the self towards the inter-subjective other, the gendered other, the cultural other, and so on). The borders without are upheld by material-symbolic structures that institute differences, and put entities at odds with each other. Who we experience ourselves to be, in relation to what kinds of others, what power differentials, and so on, are fundamentally structured by our lived realities. On these grounds, I find the concept of "situation" as being especially important for thinking about the importance of borders (especially inter-subjective ones) in both the experience of an identity, and in rendering a self-relation intelligible.

A phenomenologically-rooted account of identity situates the emergence of identity within the complex interplay of various borders such as those between different modes of time, facticity and transcendence, self and the other, individual and the collective, and so on. The interplay between these apparently contradictory modes of existence is what Beauvoir considers to be the "ambiguity" of the human condition. The ambiguous dimensions of existence-in-situation, in turn, gesture towards the flexibility, openness, and fuzziness in any account of living out an identity or in categorizing one. In

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[20] In her article, "Beauvoir's Minoritarian Philosophy," Linnell Secomb in fact, identifies one of Beauvoir's fundamental contributions as giving us the idea of woman as an "incarnate-becoming." Although Beauvoir herself doesn't use this term, Secomb thinks that it beautifully captures Beauvoir's analysis of "… embodied and transcendent femininity that is both corporeal and transforming, or becoming," that is, the fact that woman is "… the movement of carnal consciousness." (1999, 97)

fact, theorizing identity with reference to and by deploying borders, in turn, serves two important purposes. First, it prevents the reification of any particular identity and ensures its open-endedness relative to the border in place. Self-definition is, therefore, always tied to specific acts of negotiating differences, contradictions, and intersections with others. Second, the fluidity of identity, especially in light of the fluidity of the border relative to which the identity emerges, allows for changing and subverting oppressive identities. In fact, "situation" emphasizes a unique fact about our lives – that there is a certain givenness to our identities, but there is also a capacity to surpass the given. "Situation" can be both enabling and disenabling, that is, it can both oppress and liberate, depending on how we are situated in it and the ways in which we live it. The liberating aspect of a phenomenological approach to the question of identity grounded in "situation," however, lies in the fact that even while we understand the burden of facticity and the material-political-cultural constraints on identity, we also realize that identity is not simply exhausted in one's situation because of the fluidity of the borders relative to which it solidifies. This aspect can be very important ethically and politically for any project of liberation in terms of envisioning and justifying resistance, transgression, transformation, and a more open future.

Two: A Postmodern Feminist Intervention

At this point, it is interesting to note that, in its ability to talk about the self as a journey that is actualized through traveling in space and time, the phenomenological self in a way anticipates aspects of postmodern "nomadic subjects." (Braidotti 1994, 1) Rosi Braidotti proposes nomadism as a model to counter essentializing and "phallocentric" (1994, 1) accounts of subjectivity and to serve as a more effective basis for theorizing

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"trans"-national mobility (1994, 2). The nomadic model, she urges, is reflective of her own "existential situation as a multicultural individual, a migrant who turned nomad." (1994, 1)

"Nomadism," for Braidotti, designates a "kind of critical consciousness that resists settling into socially coded modes of thought and behavior." (1994, 5) It is actualized through the practice of "as if," that is, the "ability to flow from one set of experiences to another" (1994, 5). Nomadic shifts are, therefore, creative performances that open up strategic spaces for the unlikely, the new, and the unsuspected. Alternative forms of agency can then be born in these spaces. This view acknowledges, and indeed celebrates, polyvocality and intersectionality in its recognition of subjectivity as emerging at the confluence of various factors such as race, gender, class, etc.

The nomadic self as a performance in the "as if" mode, captures the fluidity of identity in so far as it seems to move between various groups/cultures without being tied down to any one of them once and for all. It is a self constituted in and through motion – fragments coming together to tell the story of a life. Movement allows it to be in perpetual transit and prevents it from freezing into one homogenous mode of being. The fact that there is no basic core of selfhood that is static is what sets the postmodern nomad apart from the liberal self, even as they both share the zeal to escape the kind of overly rooted account of subjectivity that cultural essentialists and relativists seem to embrace.

One of my primary worries with the nomadic vision as a paradigm for a liberatory transnational ethical praxis is that it is difficult to understand how the flow from one experience to another can be prevented from being acts of appropriation. Braidotti, at one

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point, defines the practice of "as if" as "the mode of impersonation, that is to say of fetishistic representation." (1994, 6) Although I acknowledge the role of creative intelligence in ethics, as will be apparent from my focus on integration in chapter five, there seems to be something particularly disorienting about conceiving creativity in terms of the "as if" mode and defining this mode in terms of "impersonation" and "fetishistic representation." Although Braidotti incorporates autobiography to make herself accountable for the nomadic performances she enacts in her book, there appears to be no clear and strong criterion within her theoretical framework that can effectively safeguard the practice of "as if" from "falling into solipsistic language games and self-referential obsessions with their own terms of reference." (1994, 6) The line between fantasy and epistemic honesty, between "myth-making" and actual lived experience (1994, 4) seems to blur if nomadism in and of itself is made the ethical vantage point.

In Braidotti's account, it is the state of movement or non-belonging that seems to give the nomadic self the critical distance from oppressive cultural norms and the power to be a subversive force against established political, ethical, and intellectual orders. Describing the polyglot as a nomadic subject, Braidotti writes,

> There are no mother tongues, just linguistic sites one takes her/his starting point from. The polyglot has no vernacular, but many lines of transit, of transgression…. The complex muscular and mental apparati that join forces in the production of language combine in the polyglot to produce strange sounds, phonetic connections, vocal combinations, and rhythmical junctions. (1994, 13)

This claim is formulated against the political landscape of twentieth century Europe, which Braidotti describes as an amalgam of ethnocentric fortresses (1994, 12) where the focus on the mother tongue as the site of unification and stability has given birth to violent identity politics. The polyglot, in contrast, exposes the fact that language

as a site of absolute stabilization is no more than a fantasy. The chief problem of the

nomadic framework, however, is to link any sense of belonging with stability, and to

view any lived experience of stability or attachment to be a constant and abiding state.

The view thus leads to the fear that stability will lapse into perverse regionalisms, static

localisms, and ethical dogmatism. If the critical and the ethically inclusive vision is

contingent on mobility and the orientation of the "as if," then the only escape route from

the ethnocentric fortress is to hold belonging and all attachment in a state of suspension.

This becomes even clearer as we look at Braidotti's distinction between a traveler with a

clear or predetermined destination (the "migrant") and one who loses their homeland and

is forcefully displaced (the "exile") on the one hand, and the "nomad" as a "transitory"

figure (1994, 35) who chooses to embrace perpetual instability on the other.[21] She writes,

"The nomad's relationship to the earth is one of transitory attachment and cyclical

frequentation; the antithesis of the farmer, the nomad gathers, reaps, and exchanges but

does not exploit." (1994, 25). From claims such as these, it appears to me that the

nomadic model commits the opposite error of cultural essentialism. While venturing out

is a traitorous act in the latter, expressing any sense of belonging becomes heresy in the

former.

The nomad, Braidotti goes on to say, "is only passing through…. The nomad has

no passport – or has too many of them." (1994, 33). The kind of detachment demanded in

the ability to constantly learn to establish connections in order to survive, and then uproot

oneself from these in order to move on, seems to be phenomenological utopia. It is as if

the facticity of our existence is completely overlooked, as all borders melt to give way to

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[21] Braidotti separates out the "nomad" from the "migrant" and the "exile" in the section titled, "Neither Migrant nor Exile: The Feminist as Nomad," in the "Introduction" of *Nomadic Subjects*, pp. 21-8.

a nomadic subject. The concept of "situation" as outlined above appears to be a somewhat accidental feature of identity on this account – something that can be shed at will. It is, however, a fact that we are born and raised in specific communities that impact our experiences, ways of seeing, expressions, behaviors, etc. in ways that makes it difficult for us to simply leave these identities behind, transition freely between identities, or retrieve a purely nomadic stance towards our lived experience of identity. There is something much more sturdy and stable about identities as lived and the constitutive capacity of borders than the postmodern nomadic self can account for or accommodate. After all, as Anzaldúa so rightly puts it, "I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back." (1999, 43) The nomadic subject ends up becoming a lone and unanchored subject in trying to escape the iron grip of cultural essentialism and regressive communitarianism.

The Braidottian postmodern framework is especially problematic in the analysis of situations of extreme oppression. We wonder how the conception of a nomadic subject can speak to the experiences of a woman sold into sexual slavery and illegally "exported" to another country as part of the global sex trade, and what resources this conception can give us in terms of transforming the situation. In these cases, women are often afraid to disclose their identities for fear of deportation and fail to communicate effectively with officials due to language and various other borders. The presence of borders in the form of national, racial, language, and other borders has a very real impact on determining her identity as well as questions of access and support. Under these circumstances, a simple nomadic vision of subjectivity can, in fact, potentially result in the dangerous normalization of existing power imbalances. In its zeal to cross borders, paradoxically,

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the nomadic self seems quite ineffective in addressing the kinds of ethical and political concerns that border-crossings on the ground seem to entail. Linda Alcoff, working from similar concerns, in fact, goes on to say that a simplistic notion of fluidity is not sufficient and the nomadic vision best suits a privileged traveler such as "the multinational CEO." (2006, 277).

It is precisely on the above counts that a phenomenological account of identity seems to fare better. This is because it effectively captures the discursive nature of identity but, at the same time, anchors discursivity to materiality at a fundamental level. The concept of "situation" is crucial in facilitating this rootedness to material realities from which identities evolve. The idea of "situation" gives us a theoretical basis for understanding identity not just as a process, but also as a carnal becoming – a task to be achieved by a body in a situation. To cite Beauvoir at this point, "… the body itself is not a brute fact. It expresses our relationship to the world, and that is why it is an object of sympathy or repulsion." (1976, 41) There is a politics that structures naming, discourse, and representation against which specific identities emerge and are rendered intelligible. However, this politics depends on the historical-political-economic-cultural realities or, in other words, the totality of the situation in which acts of naming occur. A phenomenological perspective, therefore, is able to affirm both definiteness and porosity as being characteristics of borders at the same time – a fact that liberal perspectives, regressive postcolonial perspectives, and the nomadic model seem to miss.[22] As such, it is

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[22] Working with the "betweenness" relation in the next chapter, I will argue for the dynamic character of "individuality" in addition to the ambiguous and porous character of borders. My analysis will demonstrate, however, that the kind of dynamic individuality I work out by developing a feminist pragmatic phenomenology is neither an unbounded, nor an unanchored one. My focus on "power" and the need to rethink both mobility and stagnancy within a framework of critical and comparative power-analysis will become clear at several points in the dissertation.

better at explaining the kind of examples cited above where neither identities nor the choices made can be understood in abstraction from borders.[23]At the same time, a phenomenologically oriented perspective recognizes that experiences or perspectives are never detachable from "situation" precisely because identities and borders are not detachable from "situation." As such, we must refrain from construing an unproblematic relationship between identity and cultural location, identity and direct experience, identity and standpoint, and so on. A perspective on "borders" based on a nuanced understanding of the phenomenological category of "situation," therefore, is able to uphold a critical stance towards lived experience like the nomadic model, without resorting to any problematic unanchored standpoint in the process.

Three: Interrogating "Ek-stasis" Further: An Ontology of Borders, Differences, and Alterity as Lived through Ambiguity

As outlined in Section One, a phenomenological account of identity makes it a project – a task to be achieved through action and engagement in the world. It is a contested site of negotiating various borders that are borne out of the particular realities of one's situation. And of course, negotiation already implies an intimate involvement of the entity in question with what appears to be outside it, that is, with what is "other" to it. We encounter borders in experience and these matter in identity formation. The primary ontological character of ek-stasis is that identity is not a self-relation, cannot be simply captured in the language of self-presentation, and that alterity/otherness (at least inter-subjective otherness) must be evoked in theorizing subjectivity.

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[23] I will come back to an analysis of similar examples in Chapter III, when I compare and contrast a feminist pragmatic phenomenological paradigm with "cosmopolitanism" as a paradigm for thinking about transnational identity, transnational identity, and transnational ethics.

The emphasis in the phenomenological tradition on the inter-subjective other as being constitutive of the self in a certain sense, in fact, goes back to a Hegel. For Hegel, the self gains self-consciousness and becomes a subject only after recognition from the other. The development of self-consciousness and its constitution as the for-itself occurs, however, through the process of negation, where the independent object gets sublated into the subject that it confronts. Although Hegel's aim through this is to reconcile contradictory existents into a greater unity, I find Alcoff's concern about this particular moment very interesting for highlighting a certain tension in the logical character of sublation. Alcoff's primary concern is that the Hegelian paradigm of thinking about negation and alterity has the danger of ultimately resolving the alterity that is engaged.[24] To cite her,

> Thus, Hegel's model of the genealogy of the self is a model of only temporary engagement with the aim of separation and an overcoming of dependence through achieving domination. … the dependence of self-consciousness on the other is dissolved almost immediately after it is acknowledged. (2006, 59)

More important, perhaps, is the fact that agency and control seem to be primarily in the hands of the self in this case, in so far as the effect on the self results from its own action of negation. Therefore, "… making negation the cornerstone of individual integrity" (Alcoff 2006, 293) still prevents us from acknowledging fully the positive contributions and reciprocal agency of the other in the creation of the self. Approaching "dis-identification" and "alterity" in terms of "negation" (more specifically, the Hegelian paradigm of "negation" as "sublation"), therefore, turns out to be problematic.

When group identities in a transnational world are theorized through this kind of ontological model of identity, there is a grave danger. Due to unequal distribution of

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[24] At this point, Alcoff quotes Hegel. She points out that " "Through the supersession," he tells us, self-consciousness "receives back its own self, because by superseding *its* otherness, it again becomes equal to itself" (Hegel 1977, 111)." (Alcoff 2006, 59)

power and material resources, some groups happen to have a stronger voice and visibility compared to others in matters of international law and policy. In a transnational feminist context, for instance, historically "white European womanhood" as an identity category, seems to have been constituted through its opposition to native women as "Other" in the context of colonialism and imperialism. Literary critics such as Indira Ghose identify the existence of this ambivalence or "double-voice"[25] in colonial women's writings. The emergence of this voice is intimately tied to the project of European women trying to define themselves in the public sphere – interestingly enough, an important moment for "western feminism." This context is a paradigmatic instance of engagement with alterity through negation for the purpose of self-definition. But the fact that the reigns of control remain primarily in the hands of the self ultimately results in material domination, assimilation, and eventual overcoming of the dependence on the so-called "Other" through master narratives of "civilization," "development," etc. Some of these same narratives, incidentally, seem to structure depictions of "Third World women" in the hegemonic western feminist imaginary to this day.[26] The main problem here is that, although the constitution of identity happens through engagement with the other, it still ends up becoming a process of domination as the reigns of control lie only on one side. In this way, the logic of sublation within transnational space can potentially end up collapsing or folding the reality of the other into the self as Alcoff rightly apprehends.

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[25] This phrase is used by Indira Ghose in her book, *Women Travellers in Colonial India: The Power of the Female Gaze*.

[26] Chandra Mohanty exposes the colonialist underpinnings of the analysis of "Third World" female subjectivity. Depicting the latter as Other and whatever one is not, and then appropriating them through one's own cultural lens, seem to vitiate most of these western feminists texts that Mohanty analyzes in *Feminism Without Borders*.

Interestingly enough, Sartre takes the "master-slave" moment of the Hegelian dialectic in new directions in his existential phenomenology. For Sartre in *Being and Nothingness*, one's core freedom cannot be touched by another and, indeed, "identity" talk relative to particular situations and histories only arises at the level of the ego. The real self or the pure "for-itself" is somehow free from such constraints. The Other, therefore, can only infiltrate and/or impact the exterior layers of my freedom. It is at this level only that any real dialectic, so to say, is enacted between the self and the Other.

Although the Sartrean account in its own way poses a challenge to a solipsistic view of identity as self-relation, I think that it runs into serious problems if we use it to frame discussions of identity, alterity, and border in a transnational context. The first problem with this account is that it makes the Other somewhat "contingent to," instead of "constitutive of," one's subjectivity in so far as identity itself is detachable from our real selves.[27] Thus, the real self remains a self-contained system that can be defined purely in self-referential terms. We can, at once, see how this account fails to capture the richness of the interactive contexts and variety of borders informing experience within a globalized world. It can also do little to address issues of poverty, inequality, and exploitation that impact a nation's identity, capacities, and quality of life in real ways, and arises only because it finds itself in specific power relations with other nations, international organizations, treaties, and so on. Second, there is perhaps a greater danger of embracing a Sartrean account of "authenticity," following *Being and Nothingness* and entailed by this approach towards alterity, in that it leaves open the dangerous possibility

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[27] There are some alternative readings of Sartre such as Bergoffen's reading (1997) in which she emphasizes that Sartre's analysis of the caress, shame, etc. is evidence for embracing a non-solipsistic model of subjectivity. However, there are other scholars such as Sonia Kruks (1995) who anticipate the problem of monadism in the existential philosophy of Sartre.

of reading acts of non-objectification, passivity, and de-colonization (understood as undoing structures of domination), as markers of bad faith and moral weakness rather than instances of authentic moral agency. Third, I share Alcoff's worry that on a Sartrean paradigm, all instances of embracing an identity must be understood as inherently oppressive acts, and as inauthentic or matters of bad faith. (Alcoff 2006, 69) The conflation of identity with the real self would amount to a desire to negate one's own freedom on the Sartrean scheme. I think that this picture, in turn, would be detrimental to outlining any vision of the transnational space as an inclusive multicultural space because it must deny authenticity to any politics based on identity including feminism and indigenism. In short, any attempt to draw a border and "define" oneself in relation to it would be a marker of bad faith.

The Sartrean account of the "look" is another important aspect in Sartre's early work that seems to entail very troubling consequences for a critical multicultural transnationalism as well. Sartre's analysis of the look is predicated on the fact that only one person can occupy the subject-position in an inter-subjective context at any given moment. The other always appears to be hostile and alien – someone who is intent on objectifying me in my situation and stealing my being.[28] This seems to be a direct outcome of what Kate Fullbrook and Edward Fullbrook, in their essay "Sartre's Secret Key," identify as Sartre's "object-subject" mode of understanding human relations (1995,

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[28] Sonia Kruks in her essay, Simone de Beauvoir: Teaching Sartre About Freedom" echoes a similar concern about the Sartrean position. Fullbrook and Fullbrook too in their essay, "Sartre's Secret Key," point out that the "object-subject" is the only mode of human relations in Sartre's *Being and Nothingness* as opposed to Beauvoir's "subject-subject" mode right from *She Came To Stay* (1995, 109). Of course, the Sartrean position on subjectivity seems to undergo significant change in Sartre's later work, where he is much more attentive to situation and engaged freedom. Some scholars argue that this was partly due to Beauvoir's influence and the product of mutual critique and dialogue. See "Beauvoir and Sartre: The Philosophical Relationship" by Margaret Simons (1986) and *Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre: The Remaking of a Twentieth Century Legend* by Kate Fullbrook and Edward Fullbrook (1994) for more on this history.

109). Approaching the question of alterity through an object-subject mode of relating has the danger of inaugurating an unbridgeable chasm between the "self" and the "other to the self." In other words, it is marked by the tendency to freeze the entities in question always as what I will call "incompatible existents." I use this term to capture not only the discreteness of the entities in question, but the border between them as being very pronounced, sharp, and potentially hostile for any act of crossing. The consequence, in short, is that radical alterity is the only possible relation between the self and the other. Such radical alterity and identity understood in terms of it are not productive for articulating a transnational identity in light of the complex patterns of similarities and differences among locations and situations experienced by individuals and groups within their communities and in the context of border crossings. The Sartrean attitude as an alternative to the Hegelian reconciliatory dialectic, in the end, leaves us with a version of "difference" that is necessarily hostile and virtually impossible to use as a means to open up channels for dialogue and communication across these incompatible existents.

A fundamental point to keep in mind while doing feminist theory in an increasingly interconnected and globalized world is that the way in which we characterize "dis-identification" or "difference" and "alterity" matters as much as acknowledging it, if we are to deploy alterity politically to facilitate cooperation and collaboration. I think that starting from a Beauvorian phenomenology is more productive at this point. Beauvoir acknowledges the importance of the moment of recognition for Hegelian ethics. (1976, 104) However, influenced by a Kierkegaardian perspective on Hegel[29] and aware of the contemporary political threat from Nazi totalitarianism, she expresses serious

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[29] Kierkegaard holds that although we can have formal systems, an existential system is impossible as there can be no finality and completeness to the latter. He is, therefore, very critical of Hegel's attempt to systematize existence.

reservations about approaching "identity" and "alterity" through a Hegelian conception of negation. The specific idea of "reconciliation" that is entailed by Hegelian "negation" seems to be an important source of worry for her. A dialectical movement of consciousness through the process of negation can potentially do away with differences, such that one individual becomes substitutable for another. Such disposability strikes at the heart of individual uniqueness and, consequently, can serve as a justification for totalitarianism and violence against the individual. In *The Ethics of Ambiguity* Beauvoir writes,

> And if it is admitted… that *the* subject will be *the* men of the future reconciled, it must be clearly recognized that the men of today who turn out to have been the *substance* of the real, and not *subjects*, remain excluded forever from this reconciliation. (1976, 105)

She goes on to say,

> The whole system seems like a huge mystification, since it subordinates all its moments to an end term whose coming it dares not set up; the individual renounces himself; but no reality in favor of which he can renounce himself is ever affirmed or recovered. … Hegelian fullness immediately passes into the nothingness of absence. (Beauvoir 1976, 105-6)

These remarks, while articulating her concern with reconciliation, also highlight another interesting point about the status of the individual self within the scheme of reconciliatory dialectic. If subjectivity, in a sense, is withheld from the individual at the moment for the sake of or in service to an anticipated "end term," then it is virtually impossible for the consciousness engaged in negating at the moment to ever get articulated as a "subject." This seems to be a basic inconsistency in the structure of the dialectic. By making the individual simply a moment in, and more importantly, subordinate to the system, "Hegelian fullness" ultimately passes into "the nothingness of absence." To stipulate a final point of resolution to the self/other dialectic and to take everything up within a

grand narrative of unity in the Hegelian mode is to undo the movement or the relation itself. I find this concern about the grand narrative of unity (at least as it seems to be articulated in the above context) very useful in reiterating the ontological necessity of drawing borders, understanding their definiteness/stability to a certain extent, and defining identities in relation to these. It becomes all the more clear as we recall the dangers with "border-less" conceptions of identity.

The analysis until this point is intended to highlight the fact that adopting a Hegelian logic of sublation following the *Phenomenology* for understanding identity and alterity, either results in reducing alterity to sameness, or in denying uniqueness and significance to the very self that engages in the act of negating. Compromising the border in favor of a final end term or reconciliation is responsible for this. On the other hand, a Sartrean notion of alterity as an alternative to the reconciliatory dialectic leaves us with a handful of incompatible existents and an unbridgeable chasm of incommensurability and hostility between them. This highlights the need for a model of identity that is not solipsistic, but is also able to provide us with a richer conception of alterity. Under the circumstances, a better alternative is to turn to the phenomenological concept of "ambiguity" in order to capture fundamental aspects of the lived experience of identity and alterity.

Ambiguity acknowledges that differentiation and the presence of borders are not just important but necessary to the constitution of subjectivity. Various ambiguities play out in various realms of an individual's lived experience – between the different modalities of time, between transcendence and immanence, between self and the other, between freedom and facticity, and so on. My relationship to others who are a necessary

part of my "situation," for instance, results in the realization that I am at once a freedom engaged in the creation of meaning and values in the world through my own projects but also an appeal to the other for founding my own existence at the same time. While clarifying her perspective on "ambiguity," Beauvoir writes in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*,

> This privilege, which he (a human being) alone possesses, of being a sovereign and unique subject amidst a universe of objects, is what he shares with all his fellow-men. In turn an object for others, he is nothing more than an individual in the collectivity on which he depends. (1976, 7)

The fact that a "... man is freedom and facticity at the same time" (2004, 124)[30] constitutes a fundamental ambiguity lying at the heart of human existence. Our material bodies embody both these aspects of human existence. Interrelatedness to the other, along with the world we share, is central to any discourse on identity and to the process of articulating of a self-relation.

Ambiguity emphasizes the function of the border as both separating and connecting. This implies, of course, that the existents are separate and connected at the same time through the very line that separates them.[31] This is a very different ontology of borders and alterity from the ones mentioned earlier.[32] In fact, the concept of ambiguity

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[30] Fredrika Scarth observes in this context that a fundamental insight of Beauvoir's theory of subjectivity is that the self is "at once freedom and flesh." (2004,166.)

[31] The particular reading of "ambiguity" that I develop is against another plausible way of reading Beauvoir, which emphasizes the ontological status of consciousness over embodiment. Such a reading can be plausible given the context of Beauvoir's emphasis on categories such as "ontological freedom" in her earlier works and even at certain points in *The Ethics of Ambiguity*. However, I think that "ethical freedom" which is more connected to the actual situation for realizing freedom, intersubjective existence, etc. gains much more prominence in light of Beauvoir's concerns with the theme of oppression more theoretically in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and her more concrete analysis in *The Second Sex*. Therefore, I agree with Karen Green when she writes, "It is only when her (Beauvoir's) philosophy of ambiguity is misread as a doctrine that privileges consciousness over embodiment that it can be read as a prescription for sameness." (Green 2002, 13)

[32] Of course, Beauvoir's own thinking undergoes transformations at various points. For instance, she herself considers some of her earlier work to be more individualistic than the later work. Indeed, vulnerability seems to get a much more important place because of her emphasis on "being-in-situation" in

enables us to approach the line of separation between the self and the other, between the inside and the outside, as having some degree of continuity with the things relative to which it emerges, rather than a rigid barrier separating them. This, in turn, enables us to move from an antagonistic model of the identity/alterity or the inside/outside relation to a more interactive one. We realize that questions concerning the identity of each entity that the border separates, along with their difference from each other, cannot be theorized in isolation from this fractured point. This approach to borders as lived, therefore, enables us to preserve difference without freezing what is being separated as completely incompatible existents in the process. The role the border plays in defining the lives of what it separates, in turn, emphasizes its creative potentials. However, it is impossible to discern the character of the border in isolation from what it gets separated out of. Therefore, the inside and the outside also play an important role in defining the border as the "border." A phenomenological approach towards experience, by highlighting the deep entanglement of questions about identity, alterity, and border with each other, thus, poses a serious challenge to the tendency of neatly separating out these concepts from each other in our experience. The particular ontology of borders entailed by conceiving identity through ambiguity, consequently, becomes a very different alternative to the perception of borders as either inconsequential and/or uncreative barriers in the constitution of selfhood. In fact, splitting and connection, as perpetual moments of

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The Second Sex compared to her earlier work such as "Pyrrhus and Cineas." However, the fact that she takes "ambiguity" and "situation" seriously and grapples with these at various levels throughout her life is clear not only from her philosophical and literary works, but also from her personal struggles such as the involvement with the case of Djamila Boupacha (an Algerian woman) during the French occupation of Algeria.

In this context, we can note Stacy Keltner's reference to Beauvoir's use of Sartre's conception of "detotalized totality" from his, then unpublished, *Notebooks for an Ethics* to emphasize the fact that separation and connection of existents are at once simultaneous. (Keltner 2006, 205-206)

tension in our lived experience, also become the markers of creativity and regeneration -

that which enables us to transcend and transgress from the immediate and the given.

Revisiting the work of some feminists of color, equipped with phenomenological

tools such as "situation" and "ambiguity," it appears to me that this scholarship embodies

the various tensions and borders highlighted above very concretely. Consider Elba

Rosario Sánchez's "cartohistography" in this respect. Sánchez writes,

> As cartohistography, my writings explore the longitudes and latitudes of an ever-shifting map of life, where my conciencia is affected by physical elements and vice versa. My landscape is at times eroding, but rebuilding as well, always renewing, changing once again. Each time I or we write and chronicle our real and imagined spaces, we are consciously naming, putting on the map, so to speak, previously unknown territory. (2003, 27)

From the geographical imagery evoked, cartohistography is clearly not just the product of

an identity that is situated within cultural, temporal, and other borders. It also attempts to

write into existence the very individual and collective consciousness in which it is rooted.

It even tries to transform the latter in the process. In other words, while being rooted in

"situation," it is still fluid and shifts as new borders are crossed and new territories are

explored. In this way, cartohistography not only makes the question of the local central to

the analysis of identity but, at the same time, reminds us of the problems and politics

involved in stipulating a "local" in the first place.

Cartohistography demonstrates the need for constantly reconfiguring the inside

depending on the changing topography, that is, according to the shifting borders as part of

the evolving topography. I find this account of situated identity helpful in problematizing

any account of the "local" as natural or given. The metaphors of erosion and renewal

beautifully expose the fluidity and the political nature of identity, border, and the outside.

Identity is, so to say, written into existence – not just figuratively, but within deeply

material relations and in conversation with the outside. Finally, despite being immanent in and constrained by "situation," cartohistography seeks to transcend the "situation" and put on the map the not yet known in the process. It seeks to carve out a new space (both literally and symbolically). In this way, it concretely demonstrates the potential for influencing, and possibly restructuring, the very structures that give birth to it. It thus reminds us of the fact that the potential of moving beyond ("transcendence" in phenomenological terms) is already a characteristic of "identity."

By understanding the ecstatic nature of "identity" and tracing out the ontological dimensions of "ek-stasis," we realize that dis-identification in the presence of various borders is part and parcel of articulating a self-relation. Approaching "identity" and "alterity" in terms of "ambiguity" enables us to have a thicker conception of both "identity" and the "border" as lived realities. When borders become central to understanding identity and alterity, and given the fact that they are characterized by degrees of porosity and definiteness at the same time, it is demanded from us that we pay much more attention to their histories, the politics of their emergence, how we see these, and what we do to or with these. Moreover, in light of the ambiguous character of identity and the fact that this ambiguity is structured by "situation," questions concerning "vulnerability and power become central to the living out of identities, theorizing these, and mobilizing politically on their basis.

CHAPTER III

TRANSNATIONAL SPACE AS INTERACTIVE PLURALITY:

GROUP IDENTITY AND DIFFERENCE REVISITED

THROUGH AN ALTERNATIVE LOGIC OF BORDERS

This chapter is a continuation of my search for a revised logic of borders, so as to arrive at richer accounts of "identity" and "difference" for a more critical multicultural transnational praxis. The search becomes especially significant in light of the alarming increase in regressive nationalisms, religious fundamentalisms, and cultural oppression. I argued in Chapter I that all these feed on a monadic and exclusive conception of "group identity." This picture of mutually exclusive and incommensurable groups can yield only a skewed atomistic political pluralism.

In this chapter, I engage resources from philosophical pragmatism to further develop my paradigm for thinking about borders. Before turning towards pragmatism, however, I pause to consider another popular contemporary response that is geared towards overcoming the separatist tendencies of borders. This approach is "cosmopolitanism," an ancient way of thinking that has been revived most notably by Kwame Anthony Appiah and Martha Nussbaum. I begin this chapter, therefore, by examining the viability of Appiah and Nussbaum's "cosmopolitanism" as a paradigm for thinking about "identity," "difference," and "transnationalism." In Section One, I argue that this view is problematic for several reasons and more so as a framework for thinking about feminist liberation projects and justice issues in postcolonial contexts. I begin Section Two by outlining the ways in which a phenomenological approach to borders and

differences already appears to be more useful for feminist purposes compared to a cosmopolitan response. In order to further build on the existing resources of thinking about "borders" and the identity/difference question, I then turn towards philosophical pragmatism. The rest of Section Two harnesses and further develops resources from the pragmatist philosophy of Josiah Royce and Mary Parker Follett to articulate an alternative logic of "borders" and "differences." In light of this new framework, I develop a specific conceptualization of "individuality" that allows it to be neither overly bounded or nor overly unbounded. In Section Three, I use these insights to formulate what I call an "ontology of interactive plurality." I rethink the nature of "groups" or "group identity" in light of this ontology. I argue that the new understanding of "borders" and "groups" opens up the possibility for a more dynamic identity politics, and reconceptualizes "transnationalism" in a way that ensures interconnectedness between groups without sacrificing pluralism. This scenario allows us to mitigate the rigid binary between transnationalism and identity politics. This paradigm also grounds ethical responsibility towards the other without simply resorting to an abstract universalism.

One: "Transnationalism" as "Cosmopolitanism": Feminist and Postcolonial Dilemmas

Martha Nussbaum and Kwame Anthony Appiah's "cosmopolitanism" has gained immense popularity in recent times as a paradigm for thinking about transnational dialogue and cooperation. Appiah proposes "cosmopolitanism" as an ethical-political rubric for dealing with difference and issues of incommensurability in his book, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (2006). In her famous essay, "Patriotism and Cosmopolitanism," first published in the *Boston Review* (1994) and then

anthologized with critical responses in *For Love of Country*, Nussbaum espouses

"cosmopolitanism" to move beyond a narrow vision of patriotism and localism. In this

section, I first spell out some important aspects of Appiah and Nussbaum's

"cosmopolitanism." I then point out the problems with thinking of "transnationalism"

through the lens of "cosmopolitanism" for feminist liberation projects, postcolonial

justice issues, and as a method of moving beyond group individualism.

The basic motivations and goals of "cosmopolitanism" are commendable. Both

Nussbaum and Appiah want to revive this ancient way of thinking going back to the

Stoics to redress contemporary conflicts and incommensurability. In spirit, the aim of

cosmopolitanism according to Appiah is to make it "… harder to think of the world as

divided between the West and the Rest; between locals and moderns; between a bloodless

ethic of profit and a bloody ethic of identity; between 'us' and 'them.' (2006 xxi) A

similar motivation characterizes Nussbaum's work. Through the ideal of

cosmopolitanism she seeks to avoid the pitfalls of a politics of "ethnocentric

particularism" (Nussbaum 1996, 5), especially ones that are based on regressive national

identities.

Cosmopolitanism, as conceived by Appiah and Nussbaum, appears to be

primarily based on universals. Appiah thinks that universality of values, habits, etc.

characterize human beings in the sense of at least being statistical norms in every society.

He writes,

> It is hard, though, to resist the evidence that, starting with our common biology
> and the shared problems of the human situation… human societies have ended up
> having many deep things in common. Among them are practices like music,
> poetry, dance, marriage, funerals; values resembling courtesy, hospitality, sexual
> modesty, generosity, reciprocity, the resolution of social conflict; concepts such
> as good and evil, right and wrong, parent and child, past, present, and future. 'If a

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lion could speak, Ludwig Wittgenstein wrote, 'we couldn't understand him.' It's shared human nature, he meant, that allows us to make sense of one another." (Appiah 2006, 97)

Appiah sometimes admits that a cosmopolitan encounter with people from other cultures need not necessarily start with what all normal human beings universally share, but could also begin with things that the people at hand share in common such as interests, hobbies, etc. In light of this he writes, "The conclusion is obvious enough: the points of entry to cross-cultural conversations are things that are shared by those who are in the conversation." However, his focus on universal human nature resurfaces time and again throughout his book. "Cosmopolitanism," writes Appiah, "as we've been conceiving it, starts with what is human in humanity." (2006, 134) The main way of dealing with plurality in cosmopolitanism is through emphasizing commonality over and above differences, that is, to reveal the liberal "individual" at the core. A similar sentiment is captured in Nussbaum's definition of a "cosmopolitan" who, according to her, is "the person whose allegiance is to the worldwide community of human beings." (1996, 4) This stance, therefore, "asks us to give our first allegiance to what is morally good – and that which, being good, I can commend as such to all human beings." (Nussbaum 1996, 5)

Despite being opposed to a variety of cosmopolitanism that seeks to homogenize,[33] Appiah and Nussbaum end up disregarding the ontological solidity of borders. Referencing the Stoics, Nussbaum for instance writes, "The accident of where one is born is just that, an accident; any human being might have been born in any

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[33] Appiah, in fact, considers this tendency to be counter-cosmopolitanism. "Join us, the counter-cosmopolitans say, and we will be sisters and brothers. But each of them plans to trample on our differences…." (2006, 145). Appiah points out that, "For the counter-cosmopolitans… universalism issues in uniformity." (*Ibid*)

nation." (1996, 7)[34] In light of this, the existence of borders and differences appear to be epiphenomenal. Borders exist, but do not appear to carry any ontological weight for selfhood and agency. Appiah writes in a similar vein, "Cross-cultural analysis reveals that there really are some basic mental traits that are universal… ." And he goes on to say, "Building on these traits, on our biological natures, cultures produce a great deal of variety, but also much that is the same." (Appiah 2006, 96) "Cosmopolitanism" is, in Appiah's terms, "universality plus difference." (2006, 151) Borders and cultural differences become contingent aspects of one's existence, added on to our universal nature through processes of acculturation. Ontologically, therefore, we get an unbounded individual as the primary unit within the cosmopolitan framework. "Transnationalism" on Appiah's framework, therefore, becomes primarily a matter of moving between groups (that themselves appear to be static) without being affected by any of them in any true sense. Interestingly enough, thus conceived, Appiah's cosmopolitan begins to appear much like Rosi Braidott's postmodern nomadic subject – a perspective for postcolonial feminisms that I critiqued in the previous chapter.

Nussbaum, following the Stoics, conceives of cosmopolitanism on the model of concentric circles, where the smallest one encircles the self and the largest one includes all of humanity. To quote her,

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[34] There are moments in Nussbaum's work where she seems to be more willing to acknowledge special affections and identifications. She thinks that the Stoics themselves were also willing to acknowledge this. However, it is difficult to see how these claims can be accommodated consistently in her theoretical framework, given the assertions as the one just cited. In fact, while critiquing antiliberal feminists, Nussbaum goes on to say, "But we can ask how wise antiliberal feminists are to jettison the liberal account of the human essence in favor of an account that gives more centrality to "accidental" features of religion or class or even gender. These features are especially likely not to have been chosen by the women themselves and to embody views of life that devalue and subordinate them." (Nussbaum 2005, 556-7). Nussbaum is right to point out that various aspects of our identities are not a product of conscious and intentional choice. However, it seems that this then becomes the ground for denying their ontological bearing on our identties and sense of agency. Not only is the logic of this move unclear, but its empirical reality is at issue, given the fact that often things we have not chosen freely end up impacting our life's possibilities in fundamental ways.

> The first one encircles the self, the next takes in the immediate family, then follows the extended family, then, in order, neighbors or local groups, fellow city-dwellers, and fellow countrymen – and we can easily add to this list groupings based on ethnic, linguistic, historical, professional, gender, or sexual identities. Outside all these circles is the largest one, humanity as a whole. … But we should… give the circle that defines our humanity special attention and respect. (Nussbaum 1996, 9)

I find the concentric circle model for thinking about "transnationalism" to be chiefly an additive approach, and not an interactive one. The relation between the circles seem to be purely contingent in so far as there is no intersection or interaction between them. Movement between groups is not problematized. Transnational identity is a matter of moving freely between circles, changing "guises," (Nussbaum 1996, 9)[35] and enlarging one's sphere of existence (one's social body so to say) step by step without one step having any real impact on the other. Group identification is also not sufficiently problematized. Placing an individual in a group, it seems, is an affair dependent on which marker we choose (sexual, ethnic, and so on). There is no attempt to theorize identifications, and classifications based on such identifications in light of discussions about who is classifying, to what ends, with what power, and so on. These questions, however, are crucial from a postcolonial feminist perspective.

Jose-Antonio Orosco articulates a critique of cosmopolitanism from a similar concern with the cosmopolitan approach to "identity." He finds the notion of "solidarity" based on a cosmopolitan take on identity to be too thin. He points out that any notion of abstract world citizenship is almost predicated on pretending to exist in a virtual community of interest with others. And, pretending to exist in a virtual community with others can often turn one into a detached individual who loves an abstract and personal

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[35] The fact that differences become "guises" for clothing the "human" is clear, when Nussbaum writes that students must "…learn to recognize humanity wherever they encounter it, undeterred by traits that are strange to them, and be eager to understand humanity in all its strange guises." (1996, 9)

good. Orosco writes, "Such people are potential fanatics, incapable of measuring their own ideals against the frailties and limitations of others." (2003, 209) "The most extreme danger arising from this detached individualism," continues Orosco, "may be what Cornel West calls the 'gangsterization of culture' – as people start to distrust one another and see everyone else as a competitor in a search for happiness, they can easily adopt a predatory posture …." (2003, 208)

Orosco's critique becomes especially relevant in light of some of the following claims made by Nussbaum. According to Nussbaum, for instance, "A favored exercise in this process of world thinking is to conceive of the entire world of human beings as a single body, its many peoples as so many limbs." (1996, 10) She writes further, "No theme is deeper in Stoicism than the damage done by faction and local allegiances to the political life of a group. Political deliberation, they argue, is sabotaged again and again by partisan loyalties, whether to one's team at the Circus or to one's nation. Only by making our fundamental allegiance to the world community of justice and reason do we avoid these dangers." (Nussbaum 1996, 8) I think that "justice" and "reason," referenced in this way, are too abstract as resources for thinking about "solidarity." They almost demand of us a detached imagination that might be impossible to actualize in practical life. Benjamin Barber in his essay "Constitutional Faith," voices a similar concern. Barber observes, "Like such kindred ideas as legal personhood, contract society, and the economic market, the idea of cosmopolitanism offers little or nothing for the human psyche to fasten on." (1996, 33)[36]

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[36] Barber goes on to say, "Diogenes may have regarded himself a citizen of the world, but global citizenship demands of its patriots levels of abstraction and disembodiment most women and men will be unable or unwilling to muster, at least in the first instance." (1996, 34) Gertrude Himmelfarb, in "The Illusions of Cosmopolitanism" writes, "Nussbaum speaks of the 'substantive universal values of justice and

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In fact, even in Appiah's discussion of "imagination" (a concept of great importance for his cosmopolitanism), it is not at all clear whether or how far imagination is actually influenced by one's own embodiment and embodied encounter with the other. Appiah writes, "Conversations across boundaries of identity – whether national, religious, or something else – begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own." (2006, 85) A cosmopolitan engagement with the experiences and ideas of others can be effected through such imaginative encounters. However, on Appiah's scheme it is hard to discern whether there is any necessary tie between embodied encounter on the one hand, and epistemic frames and capacities on the other. This will be especially troubling for feminists who have historically argued for the examination of norms, epistemic frames and capacities, etc. in light of gendered experience.

A particular problematic dimension of "transnationalism" as "cosmopolitanism" is that "borders" continue to figure as practical obstacles, the primary role of which is to obstruct cosmopolitan conversation. Nussbaum and Appiah do nothing to alter their negative connotation. Their response to the dividing character of borders, is to either background them in discourses on transnationalism or eliminate them in theory. Such backgrounding or elimination is practically impossible in a great deal of cases, and is not sufficient for addressing issues of justice in many others. In fact, this move might end up serving quite the opposite purpose. One such example can be found in Jamaica Kincaid's book, *A Small Place*. This book is born out of Kincaid's reflections as a tourist to the

right,' the 'world community of justice and reason,' …. But where can we find those substantive, universal, common values? And what are they, specifically, concretely, existentially? To answer those questions is to enter the world of reality- which is the world of nations, countries, peoples, and polities." (1996, 74-5)

Caribbean. She recognizes that she, as a tourist, enjoys a certain freedom that is parasitic on the misery and poverty of the natives of the place she visits. Kincaid writes,

> Every native would like to find a way out, every native would like a rest, every native would like a tour. But some natives – most natives in the world- cannot go anywhere. They are too poor. … they are too poor to live properly in the place where they live, which is the very place you, the tourist, want to go – so when the natives see you, the tourist, they envy you, they envy your ability to leave your own banality and boredom, they envy your ability to turn their own banality and boredom into a source of pleasure for yourself." (2000, 18-19)

I consider her observation as highlighting at least two important things. First, native places and peoples are always vulnerable to the gaze of the tourist, who enjoys significant material power and privilege relative to them. Agency and privilege or its lack in each case is, therefore, intimately tied to the national, economic, cultural, and other borders in place. Second, the tourist is capable of venturing out both physically and mentally from her own place, whereas the native is stuck in theirs (irrespective of whether she wishes to move or not). Borders therefore, do not melt away for the native in the same way as it does for the tourist visiting the native's land. In fact, part of the exotic appeal of the Caribbean that marks it off as cosmopolitan space for meeting and conversation between cultures, cuisines and races is rooted in the immense difference in social locations between the natives and the American or European tourists that visit. In its zeal to emphasize mobility through backgrounding and eliminating borders, cosmopolitanism fails as an explanatory and evaluative paradigm in these sorts of cases. It lacks explanatory strength because it is simply wrong to say that borders are irrelevant or disposable in cases such as these. It lacks in evaluative strength as it fails to conceptualize and challenge the injustices of these situations. It is impossible to compute injustices

involved without reference to economic matters, citizenship and class issues – that is, different aspects of group identifications that the cosmopolitans downplay.[37]

Appiah's cosmopolitanism emphasizes the cosmopolitan potential of any person or place. He notes that ignorance about the ways of others, in fact, is a privilege (Appiah 2006, xviii), while cosmopolitanism can be found in the most unlikely of local spaces. In his words, "The well-traveled polyglot is as likely to be among the worst off as among the best off – as likely to be found in a shantytown as at the Sorbonne." (Appiah 2006, xviii) The king of Asante (formally part of the modern Republic of Ghana) traveling to meet the president of the World Bank, the president of Ghana being educated in Oxford, or people from the same Ghanaian family living in different parts of the world are all taken as examples of cosmopolitanism. Of course, all these examples emphasize mobility over and above rootedness. However, this account is not sufficiently nuanced to draw distinctions between different kinds of mobility, and the experiential differences within these that characterize the globalized world of today. For feminist projects this is especially problematic as struggles for actual material justice form the cornerstone of feminist ethical and political theory. Examples of forced or involuntary mobility, for instance, mark the lives of countless women in the context of the global sex trade, child trafficking, and so on. The movement of care workers and nannies from the developing world to the first world is another interesting example. Although movement is not explicitly forced in this case like the previous ones, the cosmopolitan space generated as a result of this movement within the foreign families that employ these women, hardly look the same from the perspective of the two parties. As Rhacel Salazar Parreñas

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[37] In "Neither Patriotism Nor cosmopolitanism," Immanuel Wallerstein writes, "The stance of 'citizen of the world' is deeply ambiguous. It can be used just as easily to sustain privilege as to undermine it." (1996, 124)

observes in her article titled, "The Care Crisis in the Philippines: Children and Transnational Families in the New Global Economy," "When female migrants are mothers, they leave behind their own children, usually in the care of other women. Many Filipino children now grow up in divided households, where geographic separation places children under serious emotional strain." (Parreñas 2010, 401) The women care workers continue to be demonized in the Filipino media as bad mothers even as they suffer the physical and emotional trauma of separation from their own children and lack support from their employers to travel home frequently. It is difficult to see how Appiah's framework can make qualitative distinctions between these different kinds of mobility and the cosmopolitan spaces, attitudes, experiences, and conversations generated as a result. Leaving out the intricacies of borders, their constitutive role in the formation of identity, and their definite-ness along with their porosity leaves us with a transnationalism that is inadequate for conceptualizing or distinguishing between unfair and unjust situations.

Finally, a purely negative understanding of "borders" implicit in the cosmopolitan's analysis, results in a thin understanding of "groups" and the "differences" entailed by the presence of borders between groups.[38] This explains their dismissive attitude towards identity politics (a politics predicated on group differences) and the reduction of "identity politics" in general to its regressive versions.[39] This move is

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[38] Robert Pinsky, in his essay "Eros Against Esperanto" also claims," These formulas about concentric circles and global community would be valid only if cultures and nations were as static and lucid as so many bar graphs and pie charts." (1996, 87)

[39] The examples of identity politics that Appiah provides make it clear that he thinks of "identity politics" primarily in negative terms. For instance, in the introduction itself he poses Hitler and Stalin to be the archenemies of cosmopolitanism. It seems that he equates proponents of identity politics with such nationalists who, in his words, "abandons all foreigners." (Appiah 2006, xvii) This group as examples of counter-cosmopolitans again resurfaces in the chapter titled, "The Counter-Cosmopolitans."

problematic as it fails to acknowledge the positive role that identity politics (gendered, racial, cultural, etc.) has historically played in various contexts. Barber too expresses this concern when he writes, "Nussbaum's admirable exercise in Kantian universalism" ends up underestimating "the crucial humanizing role played by identity politics in a deracinating world of contracts, markets, and legal personhood." (1996, 30) Furthermore, I think that narrowing the domain of identity politics in this way perpetuates a strict binary between identity politics and any kind of transnationalism, in so far as resorting to identity politics means doing away with the cosmopolitan spirit and conversely. This position, therefore, can contribute very little to actualizing a robust multiculturalism and a successful transnationalism together, the need for which I argued in Chapter I.[40]

In light of these concerns, "cosmopolitanism" appears to be a somewhat impoverished paradigm for thinking about "identity," "difference," and "transnationalism." I now turn my attention pragmatism to developing a more viable alternative.

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[40] Richard Falk points out a further problem with this kind of either/or binary in politics. Falk observes in his essay "Revisioning Cosmopolitanism," that the either/or binary between national and cosmopolitan consciousness that is implicit in Nussbaum et al's cosmopolitanism cannot be reconciled with the actual realities of the ethically deficient globalism of modern times. The latter, according to him, "… has almost no affinity with the Stoic moral imagination projected so vividly by Martha Nussbaum; it is a perspective of the whole that is totally oblivious to the ethical imperatives of human solidarity. It is typified by the McDonald's arch, the homogeneity of international hotel chains and worldwide auto rental agencies, CNN's presentation of political reality, and the universal presence on T-shirt logos of the animated characters created by Walt Disney Studios." (Falk 1996, 57) To state Falk's critique in his words, "To project a visionary cosmopolitanism as an alternative to nationalist patriotism without addressing the subversive challenge of the market-driven globalism currently being promoted by transnational corporations and banks, as well as currency dealers and casino capitalists, is to risk indulging a contemporary form of fuzzy innocence." (1996, 57)

Two: "Borders" as "Betweenness": The "Individual" Rethought

In this section, I briefly outline the ways in which a phenomenological approach to identity and difference already appears to be more useful for feminist purposes in both explanatory and evaluative power. I then point out some limitations of this approach, and proceed to further build on it by turning to philosophical pragmatism. The rest of Section Two develops resources from the pragmatist philosophy of Josiah Royce and Mary Parker Follett to articulate an alternative logic of "borders" and perspective on "difference." By the end of the section, I develop a specific conceptualization of "individuality" in light of this framework, which allows it to be neither overly bounded nor overly unbounded.

I examined the phenomenological concept of "ek-stasis" approached in light of a Beauvorian phenomenology of "ambiguity," at length in Chapter II. I argued that this account effectively places difference at the heart of living out an identity. This is because a phenomenological account of identity highlights various borders present in our own experience as those between the past and the present, between the given facticity of one's existence and its constant surpassing in the context of existing, and so on. These borders indicate the multi-layered nature of identity and the heterogeneity of the life of the "inside." Moreover, working through the ambiguities within experience, situates us ontologically as agents and vulnerable beings at the same time. This reemphasizes the fuzziness of the border between the self and the other, that is, between what appears to be "within" relative to what remains "outside." The outcome is an ontology of "borders" between the self and the other (the cultural other, the religious other, and so on) that is deeply attentive to the significance of borders in the formation of the identity of the self

as well as that of the "other." This makes borders creative forces, thus, challenging their dismissal as uncreative and relatively insignificant forces that both Appiah and Nussbaum imply. Understanding the significance of the "border" also helps us to avoid the sort of detached individualism that Orosco identifies in the cosmopolitan attitude and all the dangers entailed by such individualism.

The concept of "situation," as articulated through a Beauvorian lens, binds the individual in definite ways. It does so by emphasizing the concrete material background that roots an identity. This background limits not only one's ontological and epistemic boundaries, but also one's agency and possibilities. In this way, "situation" safeguards us from the cosmopolitan tendency of sacrificing solidity at the altar of fluidity. It also gives the human psyche something concrete to fasten on in the sense demanded by Barber and Himmelfarb among others. Finally, adequate attention to situation also enables us to discern the nuances and varied effects of the same borders on the lives of different individuals. We begin to see, therefore, that some of the problematic implications of "transnationalism" as "cosmopolitanism" begin to be more adequately addressed when we adopt a phenomenologically-rooted stance toward "identity."

One problem that existential phenomenological accounts of the self tend to run into is that the self/other relation is mostly discussed in dualistic terms. Beauvoir too, although better at dealing with this dyadic fetish, at times, paints the picture of a singular self in interaction with a singular other. In fact, she herself considers some of her earlier essays such as "Pyrrhus and Cineas" as exhibiting individualistic tendencies. Although work from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* onwards is marked by a greater and greater acknowledgement of the role of the other in the constitution of identity and subjectivity,

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ambivalence still persists concerning the nature and potentials of this border between the self and the other. We find Beauvoir writing, "The me-others relationship is as indissoluble as the subject-object relationship" (1976, 72), but then going on to say "But the others are separate, even opposed…." (1976, 73). This emphasis on the oppositional character of the border might very well be rooted in the desire to avoid the errors of a Hegelian reconciliatory dialectic that according to her, sacrifices the reality of the individual. However, we also wonder whether the ambivalence indicates the remnants of a reified border, and gestures towards irresolvable incommensurability between the self and the other at a deep ontological level. In one of the concluding paragraphs of *The Second Sex*, for instance, Beauvoir writes, "… recognizing each other as subject, each will remain an *other* for the other." (2010, 766)

Turning to philosophical pragmatism can be helpful at this point due to a more robust discussion of the "social" and the possibilities it provides us for thinking about the "other" as multiple. Resources from pragmatism will become helpful in both overcoming the dyadic fetish and in thickening our understanding of the logical ambiguity of the border. The logical analysis will be yet another investigatory angle, contributing to a more holistic understanding of "borders."

I would like to note that I work with a Roycean understanding of "logic" for the purposes of my project. Royce moves beyond the popular definition of "logic" in purely methodological terms, that is, as a "normative science" dealing with the standards of correct thinking. Logic fulfils this function, but it only does so for Royce because it is also a "science of order." (1951a, 310) Arguing for an approach towards "logic" as the "science of order," Royce writes,

> If a logician can indeed formulate any sound method at all, in any generally valid way, he can do so only because certain objects which he considers when he thinks, - be these objects definitions, classes, types, relations, propositions, inferences, numbers, or other "principles," - form a more or less orderly system, or group of systems, whose constitution predetermines the methods that he must use when he thinks. (1951a, 315)

The concept of "order" is fundamental to any methodological considerations. Logic, thus conceived, is deeply concerned with ordering and instituting real relations. It is not simply concerned with talking about these relations. As the science of order, logic, therefore, becomes tied to the actions of agents-in-situation. We must emphasize the agential component in ordering and the situation that stipulates possibilities, constraints, etc.[41] Immediately we realize that the reach and the roots of the conceptual level are deeply linked to the practical level of embodied experience and action. Questions about logic, ontology, and phenomenology become deeply entangled once ordering is tied to experience and agency.[42] I find a Roycean view of logic to be especially helpful in

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[41] For more on this, see Pratt's "The Politics of Disjunction" (2010).

[42] It is important to note that Royce's view of logic is also in stark contrast to one of the most dominant approaches to "logic" since the twentieth century, namely, a Russellian logic based on implication. For Russell, implication is the most fundamental logical relation. A realist ontology underlies a logic based on implication. This ontology endorses the existence of preordered entities. On this logical scheme, therefore, there is a fundamental disjunction between ordering and agency. Since the realm of logic does not appear to be perturbed by human experiences, choices, and decisions, a wide gulf persists between the conceptual level on the one hand and the ontological and phenomenological levels on the other.

Royce, with his idealist pragmatist orientation, challenged this way of viewing "logic." His call for rethinking of "logic" as the "science of order," and of logical entities as modes of action relative to agents-in-situation, blurs the lines separating the logical, ontological, and phenomenological realms. I adopt this framework for approaching questions of logic, ontology, and experience as I bring existential phenomenology in dialogue with philosophical pragmatism. In fact, I think that rethinking "logic" from a Roycean perspective enables us to open up a channel of dialogue between "existential phenomenology" with its focus on lived experience, and "logic" with its focus on the conceptual – two areas in philosophy that have historically been extremely weary of each other because of each other's point of emphasis. Moreover, I find the Roycean framework for thinking about "logic" especially valuable for feminist projects because it avoids the problem of abstraction as laid out by feminist Andrea Nye in her book, *Words of Power: A Feminist Reading of the History of Logic* against the dominant western logical tradition. (Pratt 2010a, 3-4) A Roycean orientation towards logic with its focus on will and agency is able to make the ethical and the political central to questions about logic. Fanon's perspective on logic is reminiscent of this approach towards logic. For Fanon, neither the politics of colonialism nor the phenomenology of oppression can be understood in abstraction from the logic of colonialism. The state-of-affairs (material, ethical and political) unleashed by a project of colonization, are products of a separatist and oppressive

debates concerning transnationalism and identity politics because in these cases we cannot avoid instituting borders and categorizing for the purposes of explanation, dialogue, and making policies. A Roycean account constantly reminds us that the way we order things has repercussions - ordering has the power to open and close future possibilities. By enabling us to accept our own roles and responsibilities in ordering, and through emphasizing both the agential and situational components in the ordering process, this perspective helps us to counteract any tendency of mythologizing existing systems of social and political order. Moreover, although Royce himself does not talk about "power" per se, discourses about "power" must be central to any ordering process if ordering involves will acts on the part of real agents in actual situations.

Given the above understanding of "logic," I think that "ek-stasis" read in light of the fundamental commitments of Beauvoir's phenomenology of ambiguity, highlights certain ways in which things appear to be ordered in our consciousness of living out an identity. These include among others, the presence of boundaries in consciousness and an experience of agency within these boundaries. As an ordering relation, "ek-stasis," therefore, also becomes a logical relation. Ek-stasis, as an ordering relation, highlights the presence of an excess in any act of containment. It implies that identity is experienced through complex processes of self-relation and discrimination. I now turn towards philosophical pragmatism to develop my analysis of the ontological and logical ambiguity of the border in the sense of analyzing its "ordering" potential.

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logic. Hence, Fanon too thinks that questions about experience, politics, and logic are intimately connected. (Pratt 2010a, 1)

      For further discussion of the contrast between the Russellian position and Royce's logic, see chapter six of Pratt's *Logic: Inquiry, Argument, and Order*. Detailed discussion on the relationship between methodology and order can be found in section one of "The Principles of Logic" by Josiah Royce.

I mentioned that Royce thinks of "logic" and "thought" as modes of action, which order and generate actual and possible experiences. On a Roycean logical scheme, "negation" is a mode of action entailing specific consequences. Arguing for negation as a primary or fundamental relation of thought, Royce writes in his essay on "Negation,"

> Anybody who can act voluntarily is able to do so by virtue of the fact that he can also refuse to act in a case where his will is concerned; i.e., a conscious voluntary action is possible only to a being who understands the meaning of 'not,' when some mode of action is its object. (1951b, 182)

Anything ranging from life-plans to assertions, propositions, and classes of beings (real or ideal) can be objects of negation. Even affirmative propositions and entities posited in an affirmative mode, are understood as being the negations of their own negations. This is because "to affirm is to deny the contradictory of whatever one affirms." (Royce 1951b, 184) Negation and discrimination, therefore, become part and parcel of talking about "self-relation" of an entity or its "identity."

Negation is not simply "not doing," but implicitly contains the choice or decision of not doing something that is possible and actualizing a certain state of affairs or world-order in the process. Immediately an intimate relationship between the process of ordering as being the action of an agent and as tied to a knowing process is established. When we scrutinize the process of negation in a Roycean scheme, we find that negating B from a given range of possibilities (say A and B) implies several things: (i) recognizing the difference between A and B; (ii) rejecting B and all the possible courses of actions that B entails; and (iii) affirming A and all the possible courses of action that it entails in the process. Based on the way in which it operates, the negation in question primarily takes the form of an exclusive disjunction. The exclusive character of the disjunction ensures that choosing one disjunct (and the actions and the possibilities associated with

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it), implies negating the other disjunct (and the actions and possibilities associated with it).[43] The agential component and the moment of choice become crucial when exclusive disjunction is emphasized. This is because any act of negating in the present has huge implications for future possibilities of acting and ordering. To quote Royce from his "Negation" essay,

> [t]he function of negation is, by means of the indispensable and fundamental not-relation, to lay a basis for an understanding of the complexities and asymmetries of the world of experience which may serve to clarify our ideas and systematize our conduct. (1951b, 203)

One of the primary points of interest for me in this way of thinking about the logical act of "negation" is that logical categories and entities themselves (the so-called discrete logical terms mapping on to distinct objects in the world as within a realistic logical scheme) emerge as outcomes of the act of negating relative to an agent-in-situation. Understanding the genesis of a particular negation, therefore, is fundamental to understanding and defining the contours of the resulting entity or category. Viewed as an exclusive disjunction negation, therefore, becomes an ethical-political act. It entails responsibility towards that which is affirmed and negated. By prioritizing exclusive disjunction over implication, we can arrive at responsibility and accountability in logical categorization.

Royce then goes on to give a more detailed account of the way in which differentiation and discrimination takes place. He writes,

> [o]ur tendency to discriminate *two* objects leads us by itself to discriminate a *third* object, *m,* as between them, and to distinguish other objects, let us say *f and l,*

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[43] For a more detailed discussion of exclusive disjunction within Roycean logic see " 'New Continents': The Logical System of Josiah Royce" by Pratt. For a summary of the principles of logic stipulated by Royce, see "Reflections on Josiah Royce's Logic: Royce on Russell's Paradox" by Crouch. These two essays are also helpful for understanding the historical context in which Royce's logic evolves and its points of difference from other dominant logical traditions.

between which both a and b are; (2) that this observation may of itself lead to new discriminations, and so become, or tend to become, recurrent; and (3) that the result hereof *may* be to give us an idea of an infinitely complex objective structure which we are then disposed to ascribe to a system of facts…. (1904, 68)

The fundamental operation of discriminating between any pair of entities (a and b) cannot be simply construed in dualistic terms. The act of discriminating between a and b, which at the same time is an act of drawing a border between a and b, immediately exposes a third region (a borderland) between them (m). This means that while establishing a specific order between a and b, borders inevitably end up producing borderlands. It is the borderland 'm' that keeps a and b apart. Scott Pratt points out another interesting feature of this between-zone, when he writes, "It is also important to note that the mediating region emerges with an explicit direction…." (2007, 140). This means that passing from a to b is not the same as passing from b to a.

Two other features of "m" are important to note in order to understand its ontological character and to discern the ways in which borders can order things in the world. First, the region "m" as a mediating zone relative to a and b and an ontological space that can be delineated with respect to a and b, shares aspects of both a and b without being reducible to either. It is a new and not simply an additive space.[44] The second, and I believe one of the most important ontological characteristics of this space, is that it is not just a static borderland (a fixed space that can be marked out as being situated in the middle of two things), but becomes a relation in its own right due to its

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[44] Through his famous chalkboard example of drawing a border, Peirce makes a similar point. He draws a line splitting the blackboard into two parts. Through this, Peirce demonstrates that once the line is drawn, we inevitably end up with an ambiguous zone that is not reducible to either part of the blackboard. (1992, 262).

ability to actively order things. The kind of relations it can generate, of course, is contingent on its location in the series.

Through its capacity to generate a plethora of other betweennesses, *"betweenness,"* indicates continuity. It allows for connecting apparently isolated entities to a larger series. The "between" relation, therefore, is evidence of the fact that a dyad implicitly assumes the between relation and much more in order to be even constituted as a dyad. A dyad implies a third (m), or multiple third-s to be more specific as evident from the presence of f, l, etc. In this way, discrimination becomes a recurrent process. While a phenomenological analysis of the border between the self and the other already allows for the constitution of both the self and the other as agents within the context of the intersubjective relation, a pragmatist analysis of the "between" links the ordering capacities of these agents to the presence of various other ordered relations. The betweenness relation, therefore, becomes a valuable resource for dispelling any remaining traces of atomism in accounts of identity, for expanding the logical and ontological underpinnings of "ek-stasis" to a more pluralistic mode, and for politicizing questions of identity and difference further.

At various points in her work on democracy and social theory, Mary Parker Follett picks up on a similar conception of "betweenness." Although Follett neither theorizes it in logical terms nor with reference to the question of "borders" and "feminism," I am interested in developing this concept theoretically as an independent critical tool for feminist liberatory projects. Taking seriously the notion of a "circular reflex" or "circular response" found in the integrative psychology of her time and applying it to human experience, Follett writes

> Integrative psychology shows us organism reacting to environment plus organism. In human relations… I never react to you but to you-plus-me; or to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me. "I" can never influence "you" because you have already influenced me; that is, in the very process of meeting, by the very process of meeting, we both become something different. (1924, 62-3)

Integrative psychology, through its concept of "circular response," emphasizes the interconnectedness between various processes in order to explain behavior and action. Moreover, it draws our attention to the fact that even as the organism responds to its environment, a space of mutual connection relative to the entities is generated – "the responding is not merely to another activity but to the relating between the self-activity and the other activity" (1924, 64). It is the organism-plus-environment that reacts to the environment-plus-organism. Mutual co-constitution is an outcome of circular response. The latter yields a dynamic whole that is constantly in the making. Therefore, all responses must be understood in light of this evolving whole.[45]

The same is true, as Follett points out, when we look at human relations and theorize the constitution of subjectivity and agency in this light. She writes, "Circular response is the psychological term for the deepest truth of life. We move always within a larger life than we are directly cognizant of." (1924, 116) In interacting with "you," it is already "I-plus-you" that is interacting with "you-plus-me" as mutual co-constitution begins at the very moment of relating.

Perhaps the most important aspect in the framework of "circular response" is that a spiral of new relations and interactive spaces are unleashed, or logically speaking,

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[45] In her essay titled "The Psychology of Control" Follett, in fact, goes into further in-depth analysis of what it means to look at a situation as a "whole" or a "unity." It entails not just looking at the sum of its elements, but at looking at each one in the context of its web of relationships, and realizing that any change to a particular element will affect the workings of the whole unit as well. In Follett's words, "… the whole is determined not only by its constituents, but by their relation to one another." (1982c, 195)

entailed even within an apparently dyadic mode of relating. Realizing this, Follett rightly

emphasizes the *"activity-between"* two entities. She writes, "reality is in the relating, in

the activity-between." (1924, 54) It is important to note that the "activity-between" is not

simply an effect of the relating, but it also has the capacity to transform the original

entities and the relation that gave birth to it, while generating new relations in the

process. In other words, the activity-between two things is both a product of the ordering

of two things and has the capacity to order as an ordering relation at the same time. To

demonstrate this Follett writes, "It is I plus the-interweaving-between-you-and-me

meeting you plus the-interweaving-between-you-and-me, etc., etc. If we were doing it

mathematically we should work it out to the *n*th power." (1924, 63) In its potential to

generate a large series from a given range of possibilities, Follett's "activity-between" is

reminiscent of a Roycean conception of "betweenness." The capacity to generate "plus

values," in Follett's terms, is a way of acknowledging the constitutive and creative

potential of the activity-between. The very phrase "activity-between" emphasizes the

dynamic and active character of this zone.[46]

Taking the above insights of both Follett and Royce seriously, I think that one of

the crucial logical-ontological characteristics of the *border-zone* understood as

"betweenness" or *"activity-between,"* is the *ambiguous* character of this space. The

"between relation" or the "activity-between" ("m") at once becomes the point of effecting

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[46] The conception of the space-between plays an important role in Hannah Arendt's thought. For Arendt, the space-between is constituted through speech – it is the space that relates and separates interlocutors in political speech and reveals them as unique subjects. However, the conception of the "activity-between" captures something that is constituted at a more pragmatic level, through basic processes of relating that may or may not involve speech. The activity-between is dynamic, and evolving in response to changing relations. Moreover, the concept of the space-between in Arendt is upheld via an ontology that endorses the public/private split – a fact in Arendt that has been of immense concern for feminist scholars. In contrast, the concept of the activity-between emerges in my work in the context of the discussion of borders, whose fuzzy character I constantly emphasize. The emerging ontology, therefore, questions any attempt at freezing borders. The border between the public and the private is no exception.

difference between a and b both logically and ontologically (highlighted by the commonsense conception of borders as dividing forces) and the region that *connects* them at the same time so that it is possible for them to stand in this particular relation. No doubt, borders give rise to differences, and differences make the emergence of discrete individuals possible. However a close analysis of the nature of the borderland associated with any act of dividing, reveals that difference between two things also implies a fundamental connection between them. This insight heightens our recognition of the creative role of borders and their complex character, which can never be captured by defining them simply as dividing forces (forces that "cut off," "keep off," exclude," etc.). By approaching "borders" through the "betweenness" relation, therefore, I stipulate a starting-point for viewing *borders* as *markers of discontinuity* radically different from cosmopolitanism. Of course, I do not disregard the fact that it is not unusual for borders and borderlands to take on a threatening, negative, and even rigid character in the context of actual border crossings. After all, the contours of the border, where one is situated relative to it, and to what end it is being drawn and by whom, goes a long way in determining the possibilities of crossing as well as who can cross.

A logic of ambiguity pays equal attention to both the dividing and the connecting capacity of borders without theoretically prioritizing the one over the other (although in practice one aspect can become more dominant relative to the other depending on the character of specific agents involved, the situation in which they are located, and so on). A logic of ambiguity as a lens for viewing borders provides us with a superior foothold for maintaining a healthy skepticism towards them as advised by the cosmopolitans without stripping them of ontological weight as they themselves end up doing. An

analysis of logical ambiguity can effectively complement the phenomenological

ambiguity highlighted in the previous chapter so that we can thicken the ontological

characterization of a "border" and the lived experience of border crossings.

In the context of her own experience of identity as a mestiza, Gloria Anzaldúa

poignantly captures the threatening and transformative dimensions of the "border" zone

in a similar vein. Anzaldúa writes,

> [t]hat juncture where the *mestiza* stands, is where phenomena tend to collide. It is
> where the possibility of uniting all that is separate occurs. This assembly is not
> one where severed or separated pieces merely come together. Nor is it a balancing
> of opposing powers. In attempting to work out a synthesis, the self has added a
> third element which is greater than the sum of its severed parts. The third element
> is a new consciousness – a *mestiza* consciousness – and though it is a source of
> intense pain, its energy comes from continual creative motion that keeps breaking
> down the unitary aspect of each new paradigm. (1999, 101-2)

As evident from Anzaldúa's account, mestiza consciousness and the ontological space

that serves as the backdrop for mestiza identity, are marked by intense struggle, anxiety,

and pain.[47] It is, however, also a space that makes new ways of looking, acting, and

relating possible. A "cultural collision" (1999,100), so to say, bursts forth in this space.

The contradiction and ambivalence is reworked to create something new.[48] "To survive

the borderlands," writes Anzaldúa, "you must … be a crossroads." (1999, 217) In her

account of the lived experience of the border, Anzaldúa too is deeply attentive to the

ambiguous character of the border – the fact that every border while dividing also

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[47] In several places of *Borderlands*, Anzaldúa emphasizes this aspect of the "border" and "border
experience." She writes, "Tension grips the inhabitants of the borderlands like a virus. Ambivalence and
unrest reside there and death is no stranger." (1999, 26) Elsewhere she describes the "border" as a "thin
edge of barbwire" (Anzaldúa 1999, 35) both literally and metaphorically.

[48] In Anzaldua's words, "The new *mestiza* copes by developing a tolerance for contradictions, a tolerance
for ambiguity. … She … operates in a pluralistic mode – nothing is thrust out, the good the bad and the
ugly, nothing rejected, nothing abandoned. Not only does she sustain contradictions, she turns the
ambivalence into something else." (1999, 101)

produces a vague and undefined region (a borderland). However, Anzaldúa does not undertake an analysis of the various logical issues concerning the genesis of borders and borderlands that I am interested in exploring in my work.

When we recognize the ontologically and logically ambiguous character of the "border," then a space is opened up for theorizing the nature of *"difference"* instituted by a border as being not just one of division and exclusion but one of mutual interaction, constitution, and connection as well. We understand the richness and constitutive character of "difference" and the need for acknowledging, celebrating, and preserving difference in order to preserve individuality. In fact, the "outside" and the "different" can potentially become viable spaces for envisioning resistance, deviation, and transgression.[49]

A pragmatist logic of "borders" framed by "betweenness" also paves the ground for a unique understanding of what constitutes an "individual." An individual entity is not just an independent entity that is brought into relation with another absolutely independent entity. Rather, following the theory of circular response, it becomes what it

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[49] I understand the dangers of "importing" standards of criticism from the outside of one's own culture or group. However, I think that a static and monadic conception of "group" entails frozen borders and, consequently, a static conception of "inside" and "outside." This results in the idealization of the "inside" and closes off the possibility of any critique (see Chapter I for more details). The logical-ontological frame developed so far, on the contrary, recognizes the fact that the "inside" is constantly impacted and configured by the "outside," and conversely. If this is the case, then interaction between different standards and value-structures is inevitable. No doubt this creates tension and the possibility of conflict, but it is the same interactive space that holds the promise and possibility of transformation. Of course, the actual outcome, that is, the form and direction that this interaction will take is greatly determined by the power-relations on the ground. The point to note, however, is that the interactive model also problematizes the language of "importing" and "exporting" standards and values in a certain sense by challenging a strictly dichotomous understanding of the "inside" and the "outside." Even as we speak of internal critique as being the best form of critique, this interactive model furnishes valuable possibilities and resources for deepening one's understanding of one's own group identity, as well as for sharpening and broadening one's own critical tools in the process. Internal critical tools can potentially expand and get transformed in significant ways within an interactive space. This paradigm, therefore, creates favorable conditions for the expansion of one's ontological and epistemological horizons.

is or gets constituted as what it is in the context of the relation. We must also remember that one betweenness entails a plethora of others, that is, a whole web of relations that are configured in a specific way. All this implies that we cannot get any picture of the "individual" in abstraction from the relatings and the activities-between. "Man's life is one of manifold relatings," writes Follett (1998, 6). To recall, "I" and "you" are both transformed by the very act of relating, and indeed, even through the "anticipation" of it. This picture of the "individual" further safeguards us against detached individualism and all its evils. However, we must remember that the web of relations structures each individual differently. This means that every betweenness is a *"localized betweenness,"* and not any kind of general, arbitrary, or abstract "betweenness" that applies to everything in all contexts in the same way. Porosity is not equivalent to generality. This particular relational perspective on the "individual," therefore, allows for individuality without lapsing into a crude individualism in the process.[50]

The emergent individual entity, in turn, has the capacity to generate new relations and interactive spaces. Having the capacity to order other things, the self becomes an "activity-between." Follett characterizes the individual as being "a point in the social process rather than a unit in that process," that is, as being "at the same time a social

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[50] The emphasis I place on understanding the "individual" as a point of solidification within relations that stipulate specific boundaries depending on the context, resonates with the existing feminist work in care ethics and feminist political theory. This literature points to the relational character of the self and the fact that we do not emerge as full-grown adults that then enter into contractual relations with others like them. Through a pragmatist ontology, I draw attention to the fact that individuals and boundaries are always evolving in response to relations, and that relations form individuals. In other words, the individual is dependent at every level on the relations in question for her to exist as an "individual," such that the individual can be discerned by looking closely at the relations and the boundaries that these relations stipulate. It is crucial to note that a distinguishing feature of this ontology is that it is not just incidentally relational, but an ordered one at the same time – it involves will acts, purposes, etc. Since relations are so intimately tied to will acts, purposes, needs and abilities of agents involved, etc. they are not necessarily equal. Because it recognizes the unequal character of relations, this ontology is also able to accommodate contemporary developmental and psychoanalytic feminist claims about the unequal character of the primal relations through which we become adults.

factor and a social product." (1998, 60) Viewed in this way, it would be justified to say that the *"individual"* also takes on the character of the *"activity-between."*

The characterization of the "individual" as "activity-between" implies that so-called "individuals" have a degree of porosity and dynamism. In other words, the "inside" of one context as an interactive space borne out of multiple and dynamic relatings has the potential to become the "outside" to other things in another context. An "*individuated* individual" can potentially become an "*individuating* individual" when conceptualized as "activity-between." Which of these functions it serves depends on the specific relation we are looking at, operative purposes and interests, and so on. In this way, the dynamic character of the "border" and the "outside" seeps into the "inside" as well and prevents it from lapsing into individualism.

Three: Dynamic Borders, Dynamic Identities: "Groups" and "Transnationalism" Rethought

In Section Two, I argued for the ambiguity of the border and for characterizing the "individual" as an "activity-between." This approach to individuality, at the same time, takes into account the creative and constitutive potential of the border and whatever lies outside it for the life of the inside. Moreover, since each entity as activity-between plays its own unique role in the series, we are led towards a endorsing a pluralistic ontology that upholds the uniqueness, integrity, and situated nature of all individuals. It also helps us to avoid an overly bounded conception of "identity." The pluralism ensuing from a dynamic individuality, in turn, takes the interweaving between its apparently individual elements seriously. The ontological picture that we are left with is what I will call an ontology of *"interactive plurality."* In this section, I argue that a conception of

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"group identity," framed in light of this ontology yields a dynamic identity politics together with a robust transnationalism that is appreciative of differences.

I have already pointed out in Chapter I how certain contemporary postcolonial feminist frameworks for thinking about politics end up substituting "group" as the minimal unit of analysis in order to counter the assimilatory tendencies of liberal feminism. However, as my critique had revealed, all too often the unit of analysis is simply shifted from an individual human being to an individual group without questioning or analyzing the conception of "individuality itself. I had also noted in Chapter I how the term "group" itself is a shape-shifter being used to signify a varied range of things from cultural identity to religious, national, ethnic identities, and much more. Ever so often in popular culture, the discourse of the "group" and the discourse of "culture" are intimately tied to the discourse of the "ethnic," the "indigenous," and the "local." Indian feminist U. Kalpagam notes that the categories of the "ethnic" and the "indigenous" often function as "ideational unities" (2005, 340), thereby facilitating a definition of "culture" itself as such a unity. She herself wants to redefine the category of the "local" in a new light, but she acknowledges that the local is often essentialized and serves as "a legitimizing rhetoric of culture for new social inequalities." (Kalpagam 2005, 341) When group identity is conflated with all these categories understood as ideational unities, then "group" itself becomes a static, rigid, and exclusionary entity. Such an understanding of "group," in turn, serves several functions. It grounds a narrow identity politics and an intolerant attitude. It also reifies such strict dichotomies as between an insider and an outsider, the local and the global, home and foreign, and so on.

These factors make me realize the need for avoiding the problem of monadism in the articulation of identities at all costs, while I try to accommodate a politics based on identities. However, my critique of Appiah and Nussbaum's cosmopolitanism revealed that simply turning towards a conception of unbounded individuality is not an effective remedy to this problem. I now consider the alternative logic of borders and the ontology of interactive plurality developed so far for "group identity." By adopting the language of the *"activity-between"* for thinking about *individual groups*, my first intent is to counter the tendency of defining a "group" as a collection of individuals with a fixed set of attributes. This stance incidentally has been popular within regressive identity politics and, interestingly enough, its critics including the cosmopolitans.[51]

The error of thinking about "group" as a static entity is partly due to confusing it with a "crowd." Follett in *The New State* proposes a helpful distinction between a "group" and a "crowd." Of course, both are modes of association tying people together, but the two concepts in her work denote very different kinds of association. Crowd sentiment feeds on agreement and on a "concurrence produced by becoming aware of similarities." (Follett 1998, 85) Consequently, in a "crowd" according to Follett, we find that "quickly B takes A's ideas and also C and D and E." (1998, 86). On the other hand, if the group principle is working properly, then we find that "the ideas of A often arouse in B exactly opposite ones." (Follett 1998, 86). If we take this distinction seriously, then the most important revelation perhaps is that the unity in question, that is, the adhesive

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[51] I already noted in Section One how, in its zeal to emphasize mobility, Appiah's version of "transnationalism" in *Cosmopolitanism* reduces to moving between groups that are not really perceived as dynamic units in and of themselves. I had also argued that Nussbaum's concentric circle model for thinking about "transnationalism" appears to be primarily an additive model where neither the dynamism of the individual circles that stipulate different groups nor the interaction between these is sufficiently accommodated.

tying a crowd as opposed to one tying a group are very different from each other. Within a "crowd," similarities tend to be mystified such that the basic principle is one of homogenization. Such homogenization is hardly ever tolerant of differences. In case of a "group" on the other hand, similarities can neither be taken for granted nor can they be captured in any simple way. As such, dissension and heterogeneity become equally inevitable aspects of group-life as similarities. These impart a vibrant dynamism to the group. In this scenario, group characteristics are not something that can be fixed once and for all such that a "group" becomes an ideational unity designating only a specific collection of individual with those characteristics. Only when we conflate "group" with "crowd" do we commit this error. By defining a "group" as "activity-between," I intend to avoid this kind of conflation.

It must be remembered that an "activity-between," as discussed in Section Two, is as much a relational process as it is the product of a relation. Redefining "group" as an "activity-between," therefore, emphasizes its existence as a *"relation."* This means that the very existence of a group is contingent on its members and interactions between the latter – it is, for instance, the "loyalty" of its members to use Royce's term, that brings a group into existence and sustains it over a period of time. If the group depends on its members for its existence and sustenance, then an individual member can never simply evoke or take refuge in the group name so as to avoid accountability for their group's actions and decisions. One of Nussbaum's concerns with the postcolonial focus on identity, interestingly, is that feelings of security resulting from being comfortable in one's habits and local boundaries, might tempt one to find "… in an idealized image of a nation a surrogate parent who will do one's thinking for one." (1996, 15) The emphasis

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on the agency of individuals for bringing into being and sustaining a particular group, should be able to remedy this problem. The concept of loyalty also problematizes the very process of group-identification. The latter is never as simple or passive as Nussbaum seems to imply in her analysis. Identification is not just a matter of placing entities within specific categories, but in this case, it is also predicated on the lived orientation of choosing a cause, making the group one's own, and so on. The scenario is further complicated by the fact that one tends to be a part of multiple groups at the same time, which are all shaped to a lesser or greater degree by the individual's existence in them. Inter-group relations therefore, are evolving through each and every such interaction. This not only makes the life of each group dependent on others, but it all becomes dependent on purposes, intentions, and interests of active agents. Due to the fact that the relational ontology is not incidentally relational, but also an ordered one at the same time, the position and movement of real agents play a key role in constituting the relations and determining their direction. Movement, in turn, is informed by these relations. A cosmopolitan take on "mobility" fails to capture these aspects of the movement between groups.

In addition to its members, the activities of those not included in the confines of a group, and ones that choose to transgress ("traitors" to use a Roycean term) is also responsible for the generation of the individual group as activity-between.[52] Any individual group, then, is fundamentally the product of multiple relations. By delving deep into relations and understanding individuality in the context of individuation, we

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[52] In the chapter on "Time and Guilt", Royce explicitly writes while discussing the responsibility of the traitor towards his deed, "That fact, that event, that deed, is irrevocable. The fact that I am the one who then did thus and so, not ignorantly, but knowingly, - that fact will outlast the ages. That fact is as endless as time." (Royce 2001, 160)

gain better insight into the ways and structures within which individual group identities

emerge. We also develop a richer sense of their histories, the relevant power-structures in

place, and so on. Consequently, we are able to do justice to the postcolonial language of

the "politics of location." In this scenario, neither a group nor the characteristics that

come to mark it are pre-given and static. They evolve in the context of agency and action.

Ontologically, therefore, groups are invariably open-ended and flexible and have the

potential to readjust their borders in response to evolving relationships. Now, whether

they choose to or are allowed to do so in practice is a separate question.

As activity-between, a "group" is not only a product of relations, but itself

becomes an ordering relation over the course of time. It plays a formative role in the lives

of those that exist within its confines and even those that exist at its borders and beyond.

Royce, for instance, talks about "grace" through which the community asserts itself in the

lives of its members and sustains them.[53] Within a Roycean framework, the concepts of

"loyalty" and "grace" are very helpful in foregrounding the symbiotic relationship

between the individual and her group.[54] The individual gains her identity through "a

series of contrast-effects, whose psychological origin lies in our literal social life…."

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[53] For a detailed discussion of the concept of "grace" in Royce, see "The Realm of Grace" in *The Problem of Christianity*, pp. 121-42.

[54] I emphasize the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the individual and the group to highlight the existence of a group as a vibrant, living, and active unit. However, I do not claim that the relationship between the individual and the group is necessarily symmetrical. In fact, when a group is conceived as a vibrant and active unit constituted through a multitude of complex relatings, then the nature of these relations impact how much power each individual member can gain in the life of a group.

    Ricardo S. Morse, in his paper "Prophet of Participation: Mary Parker Follett and Public Participation in Public Administration," talks about resources in Follett's work that critique liberal political theories based on the concept of the separate and independent individual. He thinks that the kind of individuality to be found in Follett's work is one that places the individual as the shaper of the universe, but she is only created through reciprocal interplay. Although, Morse doesn't suggest it, I think that this insight of Follett is very useful in identifying both the existentialist and the pragmatist strains in her thought. In noting the use of the term "community" in Follett's work as a "process" rather than a thing, Morse clearly articulates the inter-dependence between the individual and the group in the fact that they are constantly in the making through each other.

(Royce 1904, 260). In fact, any understanding of what we do and why we do it, that is, all the prerequisites of a moral life, emerge through the social training in which we find ourselves embedded. The group-life is so intimately tied to an individual life – at the level of feeling, willing, etc., that it cannot be arbitrarily shed or left behind. The genesis of the individual along these lines makes her a far cry from the detached liberal individual.

The concept of "grace" highlights the way in which a community is capable of acting as a unit. It is used by Royce to highlight a certain agency on the part of a community. While I do not want to make any metaphysical claims about the presence of a "group mind" on the basis of a concept of group agency as Royce himself does (these claims do not take long to be mystified and misused so as to deny individual agency), I find the concept of "grace" to be especially helpful for thinking about the ordering capacity that a group as a unit comes to possess. In other words, "grace" denotes the formative and mediatory role that a group comes to play in the life of those that it includes as well as those that it excludes. Due to the way in which a group asserts itself in all these lives, it becomes an active, ordering relation or an "individuating individual" to use the term introduced in the previous section. As an ordering relation, it delineates specific people as "insiders" and others as "outsiders." Therefore, neither are they insignificant, nor are they uncreative forces, as the cosmopolitans seem to think.

The ontological shift made possible by an alternative logic of borders construed in terms of "betweenness," however, also exposes the messiness involved in stipulating "insiders" and "outsiders." This model not only makes us aware of an inevitable openness to whatever lies outside of the context in which we find ourselves, but also attributes a

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great deal of power to the latter. In a similar fashion, the outside is impacted by the inside. The constant evolution and reconfiguration of the inside relative to the outside, and conversely, makes it possible for things previously located in the so-called "inside" to move out and things from the hitherto "outside" to move in. All this together, at the very least, complicates questions of inclusion and exclusion, loyalty and authenticity. We cannot ignore our relationship and responsibility as insiders to what is on the outside or the fringes of our own cultural contexts. This is very different from first construing an understanding of the "inside" in self-referential terms and then extending this framework unproblematically to whatever is outside to decipher, critique, and evaluate the latter. Moreover, this kind dynamic and interactive understanding of group identities enables us to theorize current problems confronting specific groups as well as ethical obligations, rights, wrongs, good and bad in a much richer and thicker way.[55]

Theorizing the "group" as an "activity-between" ensures the dynamism of the border, the outside, and the inside. What appears to be "inside" crucially depends on what is present "outside," how one relates to it, and so on. This dynamism fractures any static conception of "local," "indigenous," "home," "foreign," etc. and, more importantly, the tendency to naively map one concept on the other. The new understanding of the "local," in fact, reorients our perspective on this space and of "home" understood in terms of the "local" as being a "space-in-transit." Although there are specific geographical and cultural factors that anchor our lived experience of the local, the contours of this space

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[55] It is true that some people will be "insiders" in a way that others are not, as evident from experiences, memories, commitments, loyalties, and so on. What I intend to challenge, however, is that there are neat categories of "insiders" and "outsiders" as cultural essentialists and proponents of regressive versions of identity politics seem to think. The definition of "Maharashtrian" stated in Chapter I is an example to the point. In contrast, I want to draw our attention to the relations in and through which the "inside" and the "outside" get solidified as the "inside" and the "outside."

are also fashioned by our commitments, loyalties, and attachments. Thus conceived, space does not remain mute and stagnant – it takes on an active character. Re-defining the *"local"* as *"space-in-transit"* is a way of capturing the dynamic and volatile nature of this space. Approaching the question of home as a "space-in-transit" also makes it possible for us to acknowledge cultural and communal ties within a diaspora.

Reconceptualizing the "local" as a "space-in-transit," rather than as something that is given in which we can comfortably and unambiguously move into or out of, prevents us from embracing a static and idealized conception of group identity. As the dynamism of the local space is acknowledged, we have a way out of cultural essentialism with its static view of "culture" and "cultural difference." Again the fact that the "local" as a "space-in-transit" cannot be simply arbitrarily designated, but tied to ways of being, frames of knowing, experiences, memories, and so on, safeguards us from lapsing into a border-less narrative.[56] In an ontology of interactive plurality, it matters where one lives, sleeps, and eats, where one is rooted, and what one identifies as her roots.

A crucial aspect of an interactive ontology is that the interdependence between the "inside" and the "outside" causes power and agency to be diffused between the two. However, this distribution of power again, is not simple. If we take the features of the betweenness relation as discussed in the previous section seriously, we must place a lot of weight on the direction of contact – passing from a to b is not the same as passing from b to a. In other words, we must take into account the precise points at which the inside and the outside come into contact, the circumstances facilitating the contact, its nature, and so

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[56] Anzaldúa gives voice to this experience of defining a home in the midst of crossing physical borders when she writes, "Yet in leaving home I did not lose touch with my origins because *lo mexicano* is in my system. I am a turtle, wherever I go I carry 'home' on my back." (1999, 43)

on. Direction has important implications for the distribution of *power* between those situated at different ends of the relation.

Tying the question of power with the direction of crossing becomes an effective tool for drawing distinctions between different kinds of mobility. One of the reasons behind the failure of cosmopolitanism as an analytical and evaluative paradigm is its inability to distinguish between different kinds of mobility. This shortcoming is effectively remedied within a paradigm of interactive plurality with its attention to the details of moving and crossing. On this paradigm the way in which a border is drawn, relative to what, on whose terms, and where one is situated relative to it, significantly impact the nature of crossing and, in fact, determine whether actual physical crossing can even take place. By making nuanced distinctions between kinds of mobility this paradigm, therefore, is also able to scrutinize and critically evaluate the nature of the cosmopolitan space generated as the result of movement. Looking at the concrete example of transnational surrogacy is useful for demonstrating the relative strength of interactive plurality over and above the cosmopolitan paradigm on these counts.

Transnational surrogacy is an interesting instance where international borders are crossed; technology is exchanged; currency changes hands and forms; and different races, classes, and nationalities meet. In the cosmopolitanism of thinkers such as Appiah, the space generated as a result would be a nice example of a cosmopolitan space (much like the Caribbean as discussed in section one). The irony, however, lies in the fact that the generation of this space is predicated on the presence of the "Third World," and the location of the transnational surrogates in this space, as opposed to the location of the commissioning couples in the "First World." Much turns on which side of the border one

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is positioned on. This determines whether one will play the role of the producer or the consumer and the kind of voice she has in the ensuing conversation. Had the strength of the dollar or the pound not been what it is compared to the Indian rupee, perhaps the incentive for foreign couples to be mobile in this way would be much less. Again, the picture would be very different had it been possible for the surrogate to migrate in the same way as the commissioning couple to the space that the latter inhabits. It would not be unfair to say that the cosmopolitanism of the commissioning couple in this case is somewhat parasitic on the localism of the surrogate. In emphasizing movement, "cosmopolitanism" renders invisible the plight of those bodies that are stuck, but by virtue of being so these bodies make both cosmopolitan experience for others and the reinstatement of current global hegemonies possible. Furthermore, designating the surrogate as a "cosmopolitan" without making these important distinctions and paying attention to where and how borders are drawn runs into the danger of covering over the inequalities and injustices that characterize her situation. The paradigm of interactive plurality fares better as an explanatory and evaluative paradigm in these sorts of cases, due to the demand it places on us to think about movement in relation to questions about direction and power.

If differences assume connections and imply other connections in their turn (predicated on the fundamental ambiguity of the border), then it is possible to embrace a *multiculturalism* based on the specificity of group identities, together with a transnationalist vision. Once we learn to understand that "difference" is neither synonymous with, nor necessarily tied to "antagonism" (although it can be so at certain times), we can hope to use it in creative and productive ways. Border-crossings will not

necessarily mean "leaving behind," "losing," or "giving up" one's unique group identity.

The drawing of borders must be interrogated, including what we are dis-identifying from,

for what purposes, and relative to what. In this case, a robust understanding of identities

is predicated on adequately grasping the transnational picture, and vice versa.

In a similar fashion and in light of the above, the meaning of *"transnationalism"*

can be revised in a way that opens up new possibilities for its practice in contemporary

contexts. While talking about international cooperation, Follett writes,

> Internationalism and cosmopolitanism must not be confused. The aim of
> cosmopolitanism is for all to be alike; the aim of internationalism is a rich content
> of widely varying characteristic and experience. (1998, 345)

It is an unfortunate truth that "internationalism" or "transnationalism" often continues to

be equated with "cosmopolitanism" understood in the above way.[57] In feminism this

attitude finds expression in a politics of sameness that ends up solidifying the divide

between transnational praxis and identity politics. I think, however, that the logical-

ontological picture I have developed so far draws our attention to the fact that

transnationalist praxis does not need to happen at the expense of renouncing,

disregarding, or undermining the specificity of identities. "Transnationalism," rethought

along these lines, comes to signify a certain attitude, a theoretical orientation, and a

praxis that is predicated on discerning the ontologically nuanced character of

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[57] And as Follett points out, it does not take long for this desire to see everyone like oneself to translate into the desire to "make" or "re-form" everyone so as to mirror oneself. This desire finds expression in cultural colonization. (Follett 1998, 345)

Of course, Nussbaum and Appiah's version of cosmopolitanism is slightly different since they do not explicitly want to do away with differences. In fact, Appiah considers homogenizing to be a counter-cosmopolitan tendency. He thinks that the sort of cosmopolitanism he endorses does not issue in uniformity, but rather, ensures plurality. In this sense, Nussbaum and Appiah's version seems to be a departure from the form of cosmopolitanism that Follett critiques in her time. Although their cosmopolitanism is a step forward, I have argued in Section One that the ontological solidity of "difference" is still at issue. I also cited some of their claims that make it theoretically impossible to accommodate "difference" in any concrete or substantial way within their framework. In these circumstances, their cosmopolitanism seems to veer dangerously close to the kind that Follett critiques, and which they themselves want to avoid.

"separation" and "connection" embodied in the border. In this respect, I agree with

Follett when she observes,

> [a] static pluralism, so to speak, would be as bad as a static monism. … Our safeguard against crystallization is that every fresh unity means… the throwing out of myriad fresh differences…. Unification means sterilization; unifying means a perpetual generating. (1998, 286)

A nuanced understanding of the genesis and workings of "difference" in the context of

interactive plurality greatly enhances the creative potentials of difference. This can then

be critically engaged to foster greater connection, cooperation, and transformation.

A successful transnationalism is one that learns to acknowledge and uphold a

creative tension between unifying and discriminating without sacrificing one at the altar

of the other. It does not assume unity to be given, that is, it does not begin with the

whole. Rather, it is a messy and creative project, which takes differences seriously and

lets them play a constitutive role in the evolution of a more holistic and tolerant vision.

"Transnationalism," conceived in this way, becomes more of a process rather than

something that can be recuperated by an appeal to a universal essence common to all

identities (as cosmopolitans urge), or a universal essence underlying a specific identity as

opposed to all other identities (as separatist cultural essentialists would have us believe).

In this sense, transnationalism cannot evolve in abstraction from and in opposition to

group identities. It must be fashioned in and through these specific identities.[58] The image

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[58] David Schlosberg in his paper, "Resurrecting the Pluralist Universe", traces the development and epistemological foundations of a commitment to pluralism and diversity from the writings of James and Follett to more contemporary political theorists such as Young. He identifies Follett's unique contribution as attempting to thwart differences from leading necessarily to conflict, as well as not making conflict the ground for the dismissal of diversity. In other words, he sees Follett as trying to do away with the necessary connection between difference and antagonism that often seems to be characteristic of the popular approach to the subject of difference. Schlosberg thinks that contemporary theorists like Benhabib pick up from this point in their discussions of democracy. I find this particular insight crucial for the development of my perspective on transnational feminism. I will come back to Follett's understanding of "difference" and "conflict" again in chapter five, while developing an alternative conception of "solidarity."

of "transnationalism" we arrive at is one of *interacting and intersecting bubbles*, which are ordered and intentional at the same time. This model is very different from an additive and static model of concentric circles, where one simply adds another circle to the existing list until she is engulfed by the largest one, but does not contribute to their creation. By recasting the relationship between transnationalism and a multiculturalism based on the specificity of identities in a more interactive vein, the new framework mitigates the dichotomy between the two, while retaining the emphasis on both at the same time.

CHAPTER IV

RETHINKING "RECIPROCITY": AMBIGUITY AS AN
ETHICAL-POLITICAL TOOL FOR THE THIRD WAVE

The previous two chapters were devoted to developing an alternative logic of "borders" that allows us to envision a more robust identity politics, hand-in-hand with a transnationalism that is attentive to borders and differences. I argued that the alternative logic of "borders" equips us with a better perspective for thinking about "differences" (cultural, religious, etc.) instituted by borders, as well as identity categories defined in terms of these differences. Being able to think about the specificity of one's own identity within the particularities of its context, and yet being able to think about connections that go beyond these specifics is an important step towards thinking about "solidarity" with and "responsibility" to those that are not like us. In this chapter and the next, I intend to interrogate the notion of "solidarity" further, and develop more concrete resources for thinking about solidarity within concrete material interactions between differentially-situated women.

In Section One, I explore the traditional liberal feminist understanding of "solidarity," with special emphasis on its tie to a liberal notion of "reciprocity." I then outline some dominant critiques to this way of thinking about "solidarity" and "reciprocity," and then go on to analyze these critiques. I focus specifically on the critique of liberal "reciprocity" from the perspective of feminist care ethics. My response to these critiques exposes the need for preserving some notion of "reciprocity" within feminist ethical-political praxis, while insisting on the urgency of reconceptualizing it in

a different way. This chapter is devoted primarily to the rethinking of "reciprocity." I turn

to Beauvoir's existential phenomenology, especially the concept of "ambiguity," in order

to develop new directions for thinking about "reciprocity." For this purpose, I first

provide a detailed analysis of the concept of "ambiguity" along with the phenomenology

of agency entailed by it in Section Two. In Section Three, I bring this analysis to bear on

the concept of "reciprocity." Section Three is dedicated to articulating a revised

conception of "reciprocity," in terms of the capacity to mediate and make the world. I

also trace out resources for thinking about "solidarity" in the context of differences,

which a revised notion of "reciprocity" can yield. I argue that "reciprocity,"

reconceptualized through a feminist phenomenology, does not run into the errors of a

liberal notion of "reciprocity" and can begin to yield an "ethics of humility."

One: "Solidarity" and Its Connection to "Reciprocity": Some Dilemmas Considered

"Solidarity" is not an easy concept to contend with. In fact, the history of

feminism is marked by moments of pessimism regarding the necessity and utility of this

concept. Traditional western liberal feminism approached "solidarity" through the lens of

"sisterhood." Fighting for gender justice meant uniting as sisters in the struggle against

patriarchy. And, securing gender justice primarily implied securing gender equality. A

politics of *equality*, in turn, has always had a tendency to work hand-in-hand with a

liberal notion of *"reciprocity"* as Eva Feder Kittay points out in her book, *Love's Labor:*

Essays on Women, Equality, and Dependency. Kittay cites Rawls' perspective on

"equality" to demonstrate this point, which runs thus, "The representation for equality is

an easy matter: we simply describe all the parties in the same way and situate them

equally, that is, symmetrically with respect to one another." (1999, 79) Kittay identifies

one defining element of "equality" according to this definition as being that "the parties are equally situated with respect to one another." (1999, 80) When "equality" is conceived as "symmetry," then it entails "reciprocity" in the sense that Kittay identifies Rawls as proposing. She cites Rawls's understanding of it as follows, "They must each 'benefit, or share in common burdens, in some appropriate fashion judged by a suitable benchmark of comparison.' (1992, 300)." (Kittay 1999, 106) The liberal strands of the western women's movement too seem to have worked with this kind of framework for thinking about the relationship between "equality" and "reciprocity," which is so clearly articulated by Rawls in later years. The demand for "equality" in the sense of equality of opportunity, equal voice, equal visibility, and so on entailed a demand for "reciprocity" between the genders.

A liberal understanding of "reciprocity" takes it to signify conscious inter-relation between two decision-making equals, that is marked by mutual sharing, benefit, and exchange. However, the implicit gender essentialism within traditional liberal feminism, historically translated into assumptions of reciprocity between women, even as it interrogated the lack of reciprocity across genders. I consider two features of a liberal feminist conception of "reciprocity" to be particularly important. The reciprocity in question, assumed *equality* in the sense of total *"symmetry"* and *"commensurability."* The assumption of total symmetry meant that there was no need to problematize the category of "woman," and examine whether it could be fractured by diverse experiences, locations, and power-differentials. In fact, the assumption of some sort of material symmetry and equality, excused the need for any sort of power-analysis between women themselves, even as they conducted such an analysis in dissecting the relationship

between men and women.[59] Absolute commensurability was assumed through an appeal to "common oppression," which could establish communication and understanding between women by virtue of the fact that they were "women." It could bind women as *"sisters"* in struggle against a common enemy. Symmetry and commensurability, in turn, served as the bases for thinking about *"solidarity."* Therefore, a liberal conception of "reciprocity" lay at the heart of the concept of "solidarity" within the liberal strands of the western women's movement in its first and second waves.

An important implication of this perspective on "solidarity" as "sisterhood" is that, it takes "solidarity" to be a given, and makes it look much simpler than it is in practice. The twin bases of a liberal conception of "solidarity" have come under criticism from women of color and postcolonial feminists, among others. [60] Feminists of color challenge the idea of "common oppression" as a basis of arguing for "commensurability." They do so by highlighting the intersectional nature of identities, the diversity in women's issues, and the conflict between women on the same issue. When class, race, citizenship status, diverse histories, power-structures, etc. significantly separate groups of women from each other, then chances of them coming together in solidarity as equals are extremely rare and difficult. Any claim to symmetry and reciprocity is particularly

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[59] Mohanty thinks that a similar error happens when we make "social indicators" of women's status as given and frozen, as a focus of feminist analysis. (2003, 56) "This focus" (that is, indicators such as "shared oppression") she points out, "is not on uncovering the material and ideological specificities that constitute a particular group of women as "powerless" in a particular context. It is, rather on finding a variety of cases of powerless groups of women to prove the general point that women as a group are powerless." (Mohanty 2003, 23)

[60] These criticisms do not merely originate in the third wave. However, as the voices of feminists of color have become more and more visible, these critiques have been documented more systematically. It is impossible to compile a comprehensive list of these critiques, as these have been reiterated by women of color across the globe. For my argument at this point, a brief summary serves the purpose. Some useful resources in this respect are as follows: "The Combahee River Collective" statement, bell hooks' *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center*, Mohanty's "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses," Andrea Smith's *Conquest*, Dorothy Roberts' *Killing the Black Body: Race, Reproduction, and the Meaning of Liberty*.

problematic. By questioning the very bases on which to ground solidarity, the postcolonial critiques of mainstream liberal feminist politics expose the problem with this framework for thinking about "solidarity." It is interesting to note that the contemporary view of "cosmopolitanism" as discussed in the previous chapter, also adopts a similar liberal perspective on "reciprocity." The basis for reciprocity is equality in terms of a "common humanity" – the primordial adhesive that renders all borders and differences secondary, and thereby, enables people to confront each other as equals.

In contemporary times, Ofelia Schutte makes an important contribution to the postcolonial discussion of "commensurability" and "incommensurability" in feminist ethics and politics. Schutte highlights incommensurability as manifest in cross-cultural feminist communication. Contrary to the popular conception of "incommensurability" in arithmetic terms as "a kind of minus effect to cross-cultural communication," (Schutte 2000, 50)[61] Schutte is eager to explore and foreground the transformative potential of "incommensurability" for a liberatory feminist ethics and politics. She therefore, pushes us to think of "incommensurability" by looking at "nodes in a linguistic interchange or a conversation in which the other's speech, or some aspect of it, resonates in me as a kind of strangeness, as a kind of displacement of the usual expectation." (Schutte 2000, 50) Within intercultural exchange, often a speaker may say something that falls on the side of the "unsaid" or the "incoherent" for the culturally different interlocutor. This happens due to the presence of "difficult to understand" and "truly incommensurable" elements, in addition to "readily understandable" elements. (Schutte 2000, 56) Schutte urges that it is

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[61] Viewed thus, the most effective route for ensuring successful intercultural dialogue would be "to devise a way to put as much meaning as possible into the plus side of the exchange, so that as little as possible remains on the minus side of it." (Schutte 2000, 50)

important not to "bypass" the latter or "subsume them under an already familiar category" (2000, 50).[62] Cultural alterity requires that the other be heard in their difference. Only when this is achieved, can Western feminism's colonial legacies be loosened, and it can succeed in breaking out of its "universal logos" (Schutte 2000, 59). Schutte's analysis further reiterates the problem with assuming any simplistic notion of commensurability and, in fact, the need for accommodating incommensurability in any form of effective decolonizing communication.

Another critique of the liberal concept of "reciprocity" that I would like to consider comes from Kittay, from the perspective of feminist care ethics – one of the most popular traditions within Western feminist ethics in contemporary times. Kittay's critique is known in the literature as the *"dependency critique."* In Kittay's words,

> The dependency critique is a feminist critique of equality that asserts: A conception of society viewed as an association of equals masks inequitable dependencies, those of infancy and childhood, old age, illness and disability. While we are dependent, we are not well positioned to enter a competition for the goods of social cooperation on equal terms. (1999, xi)

Through her dependency critique, Kittay emphasizes the sorts of relationships that are extreme forms of dependencies – ones that have not yet been, or no longer are interdependence. The infant-parent relation, thus, functions as a powerful image in care ethics. For Kittay, however, the relation between herself and her severely disabled daughter Sesha becomes the most compelling image. In her book, *Love's Labor*, Kittay provides a heart wrenching account of Sesha's vulnerabilities and material dependencies on her caregivers (both her mother and her domestic caregiver Peggy). Sesha suffers from

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[62] With respect to the third category specifically, Schutte writes, "placing a high stake on the incommensurable as that which requires recognition (rather than erasure or denigration in relation to a dominant culture) is fundamental to acquiring an understanding, even if only a partial understanding, of the culturally differentiated 'other.'" (2000, 57)

physical and cognitive disabilities. The dependencies, of course, include everyday

physical dependencies such as the need to be fed, having diapers changed, being

supported through seizures, etc. However, they extend to the need for emotional support,

and of being protected from a world that has very little tolerance for individuals who

cannot keep up with its pace and stigmatizes bodies that fall short of its norms. Once

Kittay and her husband come to know of Sesha's dependencies as an infant, they realize,

> She (Sesha) was so vulnerable. She would need so much protection and love from
> us to shelter her from the scorn of the world, from its dangers, from its
> indifference, from its failure to understand her, and her humanity. (Kittay 1999,
> 150)

Sesha's relationship with Kittay and Peggy exposes the failure of the liberal notion of

"reciprocity," and problems with tying it in with "equality" and "symmetry"– a fact that

Kittay argues for through her "dependency critique." This example is a clear case where

neither "reciprocity" nor "equality," in any simple sense, is either possible or achievable

on the part of the dependent in the relation due to aspects of their material situation.

The dependency critique is a critique of the liberal conceptions of "equality" and

"reciprocity" at the same time. Through it, Kittay attempts to foreground the material

inequalities and asymmetries in capabilities, power, etc. that characterize various

dependencies. She argues that disregarding these kinds of dependencies, along with the

material inequalities and asymmetries involved, allows us to pretend independence and

define "interdependence" as "the mutual (often voluntary) cooperation between

essentially independent persons." (Kittay 1999, xii) Instead of starting out with the

relation between equals, she therefore, urges us to look at these extreme *non-reciprocal*

relationships as the *primary site of moral meaning*, and for thinking about ethical-

political responsibility towards the other. Through her critique, Kittay highlights the way

in which it is problematic to base normative notions, moral claims, or moral practices on "reciprocity."

I share Kittay's concern with the liberal notion of "reciprocity," especially because its implied connection with "equality" might cover over fundamental inequalities, asymmetries, and dependencies within relationships. In other words, I appreciate the fact that "reciprocity" as the "inter-relation between equals," that is, as a symmetrical relation between autonomous and self-sufficient individuals, is not the best way to think about the concept. While recognizing these I am, however, somewhat apprehensive about the potential implications of adopting non-reciprocal relationships on the infant-parent model as the primary site for thinking about moral obligation, and as an alternative to starting from a liberal conception of "reciprocity." This is problematic particularly for my project of thinking about transnational feminist ethical-political praxis and cooperation.

The concern I have is rooted in an important critique of hegemonic western feminisms on the part of feminists of color. The latter have been, and continue to be very concerned with paternalistic attitudes towards them on the part of many Western feminists. As Mohanty, very aptly puts it, Western feminist understandings of "Third World women" have been mediated by "Third World difference."[63] "Third World Difference" emerges in light of the domination of the world-system by the West, and the implicit assumption of Western feminist standards as being the paradigm for a liberatory

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[63] Mohanty writes, "An analysis of "sexual difference" in the form of a cross-culturally singular, monolithic notion of patriarchy and male dominance leads to the construction of a similarly reductive and homogenous notion of what I call the "Third World difference." (2003, 19) While the category of "oppressed woman" emerges in the context of gender difference, the "oppressed Third World Woman" has the additional attribute of "Third World Difference."

feminist politics. However, Mohanty's analysis reveals that, despite being rooted in discursive relations and power-hierarchies, "Third World difference" has assumed the form of a stable, ahistorical and homogenous category in the western feminist imaginary. Perceiving "Third World women" through the lens of "Third World difference," has meant associating infantile qualities with them. It has meant perceiving them as lacking in abilities, aptitudes, attitudes, and values characterizing the powerful and liberated "First World woman."[64] Viewed thus, being a "Third World woman" implies occupying a non-reciprocal position with respect to the "First World woman." This non-reciprocal location, when used as a normative basis, has resulted in various colonizing agendas in the context of actual practice. For instance, as Mohanty notes, images defining "Third World women" in the Western feminist imaginary such as "the veiled woman," "the chaste virgin," "the obedient women," etc. "exist in universal ahistorical splendor, setting in motion a colonialist discourse that exercises a very specific power in defining, coding, and maintaining existing First/Third World connections." (2003, 41) Emphasizing material non-reciprocity has also meant its perpetuation and further solidification within institutional structures of feminist cross-cultural exchange.

It is true that most of the cases cited by care ethicists as instances of non-reciprocal relationships and significant sites for thinking about moral responsibility, are quite straightforward. The infant-parent relationship or the relationship between a

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[64] Mohanty makes an interesting observation in this respect. She writes, "The distinction between Western feminist representation of women in the Third World and Western feminist self-presentation is the distinction of the same order as that made by some Marxists between the "maintenance" function of the housewife and the real "productive" role of wage labor, or the characterization by developmentalists of the Third World as being engaged in the lesser production of "raw materials" in contrast to the "real" productive activity of the First World. These distinctions are made on the basis of the privileging of a particular group as the norm or referent. … Men involved in wage labor, First World producers, and, I suggest, Western feminists who sometimes cast Third World women in terms of "ourselves undressed" (Rosaldo 1980), all construct themselves as the normative referent in such a binary analytic." (Mohanty 2003, 22)

severely disabled individual with her caregiver are instances to the point. A clear and coherent criterion for distinguishing these sorts of cases from the ones that I have been discussing so far, however, is lacking. I evoke Mohanty's concept of "Third World Difference," as I find this concept very helpful for complicating our understanding of "non-reciprocity," and for provoking us into thinking of its relationship with ethics more critically. It reminds us that a lot turns on who characterizes a situation as being "non-reciprocal," for what purposes, and so on. These concerns become especially important when we are thinking of ethical praxis between women who are differentially situated in terms of resources, needs, interests, etc. within a transnational sphere that is already rendered complex by histories of geographical and cultural colonization.

In this scenario, we have an *uncomfortable dilemma.* The relationship between two groups of women occupying different positions is not reciprocal in a fundamental sense, since it is often characterized by vast inequalities and power-differentials that can make one far more dependent on the other (at least materially). However, if we make this non-reciprocity the normative basis for ethical-political praxis, then it might not take long for it to degenerate into an attitude of paternalism. After all, the kind of "power" that a caregiver wields in relation to her charge in an act of "care" is immense, actually desirable, and unwise to question in most cases. Excessive emphasis on non-reciprocity can, inadvertently, end up placing agency and its potential too heavily on one side of the relation. In this case, downplaying "reciprocity" in some sense, might actually lead to the wrong sorts of relationships, quite contrary to the motives of care ethicists. Under these circumstances, I think that an effective *way out of this dilemma* is to reinstate the importance of "reciprocity" or at least attribute substantial moral weight to it, while

conceptualizing it in a way that avoids the errors exposed by Kittay's dependency critique. I undertake this task in the next two sections.

Two: "Ambiguity" in Beauvoir's Phenomenology: Insights into the Character of Agency

Before turning to "ambiguity," I would like to note that the question of why women do not say "we" as a "collective," is at the center of *The Second Sex*. While stating this concern, Beauvoir writes, "Women – except in certain abstract gatherings such as conferences – do not use "we;" men say "women," and women adopt this word to refer to themselves; but they do not posit themselves authentically as Subjects." (2010, 8) This concern is rooted in some awareness of the differences between women (close to the contemporary conception of "intersectionality"). For example, Beauvoir talks about the intersection of gender and class (Beauvoir 2010, 66), the impact of slavery on gender roles among the owning class (Beauvoir 2010, 86), variance in the situation between bourgeois women and working class women (Beauvoir 2010, 110, 114, 126, 129-135), difference in status resulting from marital status (Beauvoir 2010, 114, 439-523), etc. It is this recognition that, according to Margaret Simons, sets Beauvoir apart from a lot of her contemporaries. In fact, Simons goes on to claim, that Beauvoir defined some of the central issues that continue to be relevant within international feminist theory to this day (1999, 7).

Nancy Bauer identifies two registers of *The Second Sex* - the "everyday" in which the situation of women is sketched out, and the "philosophical" through which it is interpretable (2001, 173). She identifies the distinct mark of *The Second Sex* as being the way that the philosophical is enabled by the everyday. It is precisely on these grounds

that early works such as "Pyrrhus and Cineas" and *The Ethics of Ambiguity* appear to be lacking. (Bauer 2001, 175) The abstraction is considered by Beauvoir in later years as being a mark of failure and becomes a primary reason for not affording them as central a position as *The Second Sex* within contemporary feminist analyses or appropriations of Simone de Beauvoir as a "feminist."

I focused at length on the concept of "situation" from *The Second Sex* in Chapter II. In this chapter, however, I will go back to some of these early works, especially in light of my interest in the concept of "ambiguity." Looking at the early work affords us an opportunity to study the development of this concept within Beauvoir's own philosophical trajectory, and to enhance our understanding of some of the central moves of *The Second Sex*. In particular, it is helpful in clarifying her peculiar take on the concept of "recognition" in this work, which sets the ground for the ethical orientation of humility I start to develop towards the end of this chapter. "Ambiguity" also allows me to thicken the conception of "agency" in a way that is better in describing, clarifying, and evaluating realities of transnational feminist contexts. I hope to expose some of the interesting, important, and relevant moments within these texts that can still be useful, as we think about theoretical tools and resources for contemporary transnational feminist contexts, and consequently, mitigate the general tendency to overlook these works in "feminist" appropriations of her work. In Chapter II, I first introduced the concept of "ambiguity" to highlight some of the borders that are manifest in our lived experience of identity. I now focus on interrogating the phenomenology of agency it yields.

In her early essay, *"Pyrrhus and Cineas"* Beauvoir, first starts to develop the concept of ambiguity. The debate between the two central figures: Pyrrhus (the man of

action) and Cineas (the rational skeptic), is used by Beauvoir to indicate that meaning emerges in the world for us only in the context of our actions. Projects anchor us to the world but also serve as the point for transcending the mundane and the given – of envisioning and actively carving out a different future. In other words, this potential to engage in new projects expresses our orientation to an open future that is yet to be explored. Beauvoir writes, "Each object, each instant, reduced to its immediate presence, is not enough for man. He is himself not enough for himself since he is always infinitely more than he would be if he were only that." (2004, 98) Beauvoir locates human freedom precisely in this power.[65]

The analysis of transcendence and freedom in *"Pyrrhus and Cineas"* appears, at first glance, to be very individualistic. The world appears to be constituted of isolated freedoms, separated in their particularity and the uniqueness of their projects. Such an anxiety is heightened by claims on Beauvoir's part such as, "[H]umanity is a discontinuous succession of free men who are irretrievably isolated by their subjectivity." (2004, 109) Projects that make transcendence possible, at the same time mark out differences and border-spaces relative to which these differences solidify.

Beauvoir, however, then goes on to elaborate the ways in which the self does not merely get separated, but also connected with the other through individual projects. Not only does she express discontent with solitude, but also highlights its ontological impossibility by further expanding on the notion of "project." Since I am a freedom not simply in a world of objects that are determined and can be manipulated at will but rather

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[65] Thus becomes evident in several places in the essay and especially when Beauvoir writes, "A man who desires and lucidly starts an undertaking is sincere in his desires. He wants an end... but he does not want it in order to stop there, to enjoy it. He wants it in order for it to be surpassed. The notion of end is ambiguous since every end is a point of departure at the same time. But this does not prevent it from being seen as an end. Man's freedom resides in this power." (2004, 99)

among other freedoms who can talk back to me, affirm or negate the meaningfulness and validity of my projects through the ways in which they take these up or refuse to do so, my fate is heavily determined by the other. I need the other as freedom to respond to my calls and take up my goals in their own lives in order to provide substance to the goals. In the absence of a response, the reality of the project fades away. The "other," conceived in this way, becomes a condition for the possibility of a project. As Bergoffen writes,

> The other is always in sight. As my original obstacle, possible ally, and potential enemy, I can never ignore you. Once I understand that my project is inherently contingent and can therefore only be sustained if you pick it up as yours, you become important to me. ... In my appeal I try to transform your freedom to bypass and/or oppose my project into a desire to endorse it. (1997, 51-2)[66]

By the way the other decides to respond to my project, she can either confine me to "immanence" by constraining my freedom in real ways, or enable my transcendence and help me realize my freedom.

Just as the other plays a role in confining me either to immanence or opening up the possibility of my transcendence, I play the same role for the other. I participate in the construction of their selves concretely through the ways in which I respond to their projects and the goals that they have created for themselves. I create for the other according to Beauvoir, "points of departure" (2004, 121).[67] Despite the fact that ultimately I cannot touch the other's freedom, and "found" their existence for them[68],

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[66] Bergoffen clarifies Beauvoir's position further when she writes, "... in embarking on my project I also take on the task of creating a public to whom I can appeal. This public is essential to my project. It is through the project that I am linked to/with others and it is through these others that I, as my project, am linked to the future." (1997, 52)

[67] Beauvoir uses this phrase a number of times in this essay.

[68] Beauvoir makes claims such as, "One must accomplish one's own salvation." (2004, 125). She further states, "I am not the one who founds the other; I am only the instrument upon which the other founds himself. He alone makes himself be by transcending my gifts." (Beauvoir 2004, 121)

Beauvoir at the same time proclaims "... whatever I do, I exist before him (the other). ... I am the facticity of his situation. ... The fate that weighs on the other is always us." (2004, 126)[69] The other, therefore, can be free only in and through their relation with us. Moreover, how I respond to the other plays an important role in determining the direction of my project and, consequently, in what I will become.

It is interesting to note a certain ambiguity in Beauvoir's own voice regarding the question of "freedom" and the character of "agency" in this early work – an ambiguity that lingers at several points even through her later works. This ambiguity lies in acknowledging a core internal freedom of the early Sartrean kind while constantly questioning it through her analysis human relations, and later through a phenomenology of oppression in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* and *The Second Sex*. Even in "Pyrrhus and Cineas," however, we see Beauvoir as proclaiming that the other can only create points of departure for us, but then attributing a great deal of significance to this function of the other. She categorically states, "We need others in order for our existence to become founded and necessary." (Beauvoir 2004, 129) The other therefore, seems to play a far more constitutive and creative role in the formation of the self – perhaps to a much greater degree than Beauvoir herself is willing to acknowledge at the time. We already begin to see an impulse to expand the notion of "freedom" beyond pure interiority – to explain and theorize the capacity for transcendence as the site of agency in relational terms. We already begin to notice points of rupture in the border separating the self and the other, and the deep ontological bond between the two.

The analysis of freedom and the model for thinking about identity and

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[69] Beauvoir also writes, "... the life of the other would have been completely different if I hadn't crossed his path, pronounced these words, if I hadn't been there." (2004, 125)

individuality starts to become even less individualistic in *The Ethics of Ambiguity,* where Beauvoir introduces the distinction between two different kinds of freedom. This distinction perhaps is an outcome of trying to reconcile the tension between a pure internal freedom with one that is manifest in experience. It could also have been proposed to deal with an ethical dilemma confronting the question of freedom in existential phenomenology, and particularly Sartre's treatment of it in *Being and Nothingness.* Sartre's dichotomy between the in-itself and the for-itself results in a radical conception of freedom. Sonia Kruks draws our attention to the radical nature of freedom posited in Sartre when she outlines certain features of a Sartrean notion of freedom,

> [s]ince my freedom is an indestructible power of nihilation, the other can never finally touch it. .. although the other objectifies what we might call the external manifestations of my freedom, I always remain a freedom. I remain free to choose my own action in response to the other's transcendence; and I always retain the possibility of turning the tables on the other. (1995, 83)

Freedom for Sartre, pertains absolutely to the "for-itself" as opposed to the "in-itself".[70] Freedom thus conceived, is forever beyond the reach of oppression since identity and vulnerability pertain only to the exterior layers of the self – to our being-in-situation. Sonia Kruks summarizes this well when she writes,

> For Sartre, there is no middle ground. Either the "for-itself," the uncaused upsurge of freedom, exists w*hatever* the facticities of its situation, or else it does not exist. In the latter case, one is dealing with the realm of inert being. (1995, 88)

In light of the strict opposition between the in-itself and the for-itself on a Sartrean ontology, oppression is reduced to being primarily a matter of bad faith and self-imposition.

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[70] Kristina Arp also makes this point in her book, *The Bonds of Freedom*. See Arp, 54.

Freedom conceived in light of Sartrean ontology inaugurates an ethical dilemma for existential phenomenology. If my core freedom is something that always remains shielded, how is it possible to condemn oppression on moral grounds, or to demand a change in oppressive structures? This account is extremely problematic, not only in its failure to account for structural and distributive inequalities and exploitation, but also in its inability to question these. It, therefore, leaves marginalized and oppressed groups with few resources in their struggles against unjust situations. I think that, at this point, Beauvoir's nuanced distinction between different kinds of freedom provides us with the ingredients for eventually outlining a more phenomenologically robust framework for theorizing freedom and agency as these are lived.[71]

Beauvoir clarifies at the very beginning of *The Ethics of Ambiguity* that freedom should not be viewed as a thing or a quality that is naturally attached to a thing. In so far as a natural quality of a thing is concerned, we cannot get the thing apart from it. In other words, either something has the quality or it doesn't. Therefore, natural qualities demand a binary vocabulary of description. I read Beauvoir's caution to not think of freedom as a thing or a natural quality as a call to not characterize it in the binary terms of absolute presence versus absolute absence, thus, making its manifestation dependent on situation.

[71] It is interesting that Beauvoir often writes as if she is defending Sartre against critics such as Mearleau-Ponty. However, in the process, she arrives at a very un-Sartrean ontology. Kruks writes that this is particularly true about the questions of freedom and oppression (1995, 82). Since for Sartre, freedom is an indestructible power of annihilation, no one can ultimately steal it from us. Only the exterior of this freedom can be touched by the other. Therefore, for Sartre, relations of otherness are conflictual and most importantly, it is a relation between two equal freedoms. Kruks writes, "It is this assumption… that Beauvoir quietly challenges. Her challenge… implies that there are degrees, or gradations, of freedom – and that social situations modify freedom itself and not merely its facticity or exteriority." (1995, 84) Kruks notes the resonance between this approach and Merleau-Ponty's view of "freedom." Her essay, "Simone de Beauvoir: Teaching Sartre about Freedom" is helpful for exploring the connections between Beauvoir and these other philosophers. I will address the nuanced distinctions that Beauvoir introduces within "freedom" in greater detail in the next few pages.

Beauvoir is, however, still quite abstract in *The Ethics of Ambiguity* when she writes, "To will oneself free is to effect the transition from nature to morality by establishing a genuine freedom on the original upsurge of our existence." (1976, 25). This quote indicates a gap and, indeed, a certain tension between the freedom that pertains to our "original upsurge of existence" and the freedom that is actualized through existing. Beauvoir reads this gap as being a gap between *natural freedom*[72] and *ethical freedom*[73] (1976, 24). She emphasizes the transition from the former to the latter as being contingent on action (willing in this case). Willing indicates a choice. One can either choose not to will oneself free or choose to assume one's freedom. When someone makes the latter choice, then she achieves ethical freedom. Beauvoir's emphasis on the category of ethical freedom and, in fact, on the idea of freedom as something to be achieved is evident when she writes,

> Every man is originally free, in the sense that he spontaneously casts himself into the world. But if we consider this spontaneity in its facticity, it appears to us only as a pure contingency, an upsurging as the stupid clinamen of the Epicurean atom which turned up at any moment whatsoever from any direction whatsoever. (1976, 25)

In order to be genuine, freedom must be actively founded.[74] In Beauvoir's words, "If a man wishes to save his existence, as only he himself can do, his original spontaneity must be raised to the height of moral freedom by taking itself as an end through the disclosure of a particular content." (1976, 32) Thus, we see the emergence of the category of ethical freedom, the emphasis on which increases steadily from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* through

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[72] Beauvoir scholars often use the term "ontological freedom" in place of "natural freedom." See Arp, *The Bonds of Freedom*, 55.

[73] Arp prefers to use the term "moral freedom" in place of "ethical freedom." (2001, 55)

[74] Beauvoir writes further, "… it (freedom) is precisely only by having to be conquered that it gives itself" (1976, 25).

The Second Sex. It is also interesting to see Beauvoir characterizing "ethical freedom" as "genuine freedom," in a distinctly un-Sartrean voice.

In light of this, I think that it would not be unfair to read "ontological freedom" more as a latent capacity that must be converted into presence through action. If this is the case, then we must critically engage the conditions for the possibility of actions that render freedom possible, in order to discern its content and the form that it ultimately takes. The category of "ethical freedom" theorized in Beauvoir's sense, therefore, equips phenomenology with a distinct vocabulary for theorizing freedom in the context of a carnal existence – an existence that plays a real role in determining whether or not freedom can be actualized in the course of a life. By instituting this distinction, Beauvoir takes a huge step in complicating the relationship between consciousness (the for-itself) and inert being (the in-itself). Not only does freedom not remain an indestructible aspect of the for-itself, but the simple dichotomy between the for-itself and the in-itself that represses the relation between the two, is itself challenged. Questions about the nature of freedom and conditions of agency, therefore, become complicated.

I consider the distinction between "ontological freedom" and "ethical freedom" to be much more than a simple theoretical device. Beauvoir's labeling of "ethical freedom" as "genuine freedom" (1976, 25) is evidence that she is already in the process of emphasizing connections between the self and the other, the self and the world, etc. along with the constitutive potential of the border between these. To explain: if genuine freedom is contingent upon projects and actions, the validation and possibility of which is dependent on my relation to others; then others impact and constitute my freedom at a

very fundamental level.[75] Beauvoir declares, "Only the freedom of others keeps each one of us from hardening in the absurdity of facticity." (1976, 71) The capacity of transcendence as the site of agency, therefore, now becomes tied more intimately to a fundamental interdependence between the self and the other.[76] It is also interesting to note the way in which the notion of "project" which appears to be very individualistic at first glance ends up facilitating a move from the "I" to a "we" consciousness.[77]

Through an extensive use of the critical category of "situation" later in *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir concerns herself even more with the situated nature of human experience, knowledge, action, and judgment, along with the engaged nature of agency – *freedom-in-situation*.[78] The complex aspects of a situation structure human agency and its experience at every level – for instance, how we view ourselves, what we understand our abilities to be, how we judge actions, and in the end, what we end up doing. If we are free in situation, then the configurations of the situation would greatly impact the nature of the freedom in question. In light of Beauvoir's emphasis on the non-foundational character of experience, the analysis of gender oppression in *The Second Sex*, and her emphasis on the concept of "situation," the importance of ontological freedom somehow recedes in the background. Ontological freedom becomes more of a formal orientation, since it is not

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[75] Bergoffen approaches *The Ethics of Ambiguity* through a similar lens when she writes, "The subject, as the source of meaning, is a source of meaning from a particular place in an intersubjective field – a field in which it finds itself already made meaningful by others." (1997, 88)

[76] Beauvoir writes, "I concern others and they concern me. There we have an irreducible truth. The me-others relationship is as indissoluble as the subject-object relationship." (1976, 72)

[77] Bergoffen is of the same view when she remarks, "... the idea of the project and the concept of absolute freedom are essential to the ways in which Beauvoir works through the issues of relationship, responsibility and violence. ... Beauvoir argues that it (project) and it alone is the basis of our relationship to the other." (1997, 46)

[78] I analyzed the concept of "situation" at great length in Chapter II.

clear how meaningful ontological freedom is in the life of a person when, in principle, she is left utterly destitute by her situation.[79] I think that discussions of agency will be greatly enriched once this nuance is taken into account. In fact, the kind of freedom that is lived is a more effective starting-point for discerning questions of liberation and oppression within inter-subjective relations. Drawing from different resources and working out a phenomenology of sex-right, Kathy Miriam proposes a distinction between "agency" as "how a human subject lives through her or his situation," from "freedom" as "a capacity to co-create (and transform) one's situation" (2007, 213). She makes this distinction in order to explain how women and girls' sexual agency often reproduces and retrenches heterosexism, rather than overturning their existent historical/sexual situation, and marking a new kind of sexual freedom. My attempt to define "agency" in terms of situated possibilities and our experience of these possibilities, resonates with Miriam's focus on the manifestation of agency in and through living through situations. In the next

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[79] There has been disagreement among Beauvoir scholars about the status of the different kinds of freedom in Beauvoir's work. For instance, Kruks reads Beauvoir as saying that "social situations may modify freedom *itself* and not merely its exteriority." (2001, 38) At another point in the book, Kruks writes, "The embodied subject of *The Second Sex* is social through and through, a gendered subject whose freedom is situated, at best always partial, at worst rendered immanent." (2001, 49) Kristina Arp provides an analysis of Kruk's reading in a similar way. Arp writes, "Under conditions of extreme oppression for Beauvoir, Kruks says, 'freedom can be reduced to no more than a suppressed potentiality.'" (Arp 2001, 7) Arp, however, gives us a different reading. She claims on the contrary that "even the most severely oppressed, always retain their ontological freedom." (Arp 2001, 7) Arp thinks that even while a person's freedom can be infinite, she can be deprived of power by aspects of her situation. In chapter six of her book *The Bonds of Freedom* Arp argues that power in some sense, serves as the foundation of moral freedom (2001, 121). However, both Kruks and Arp are in agreement that the distinction between ontological and moral freedom is a distinct contribution of Beauvoir, and is a clear departure from early Sartrean ontology. I share their emphasis on the distinction between the kinds of freedom in Beauvoir's work.

My reading of Beauvoir's view on the status of "ontological freedom," however, comes closer to Kruks. I consider the importance of "ontological freedom" in Beauvoir's work as being more of a normative impetus that might provide some hope and orientation for the future under horrendous conditions. It can also serve as a normative standard, since it provides us a way of justifying the need for preserving individual integrity that liberal feminists draw our attention to. There is equality in terms of the potential to be free, yet by itself, this concept is insufficient since it gives us no clue about how the actualization of this potential is possible in the real world.

chapter, I will highlight a further distinction – one between "agency" and "empowerment."

The category of "ethical freedom," as analyzed so far, is very effective in highlighting the way in which agency is marked by an ambiguity between transcendence and immanence, and how it emerges in the world and in relation to other agents. In other words agency, both phenomenologically and ontologically, embodies a tension between freedom and vulnerability and is shaped by a complex interplay between these apparently contradictory aspects of our existence. In fact, the actualization of agency is predicated on the recognition of vulnerability in a crucial sense. The ambiguity between transcendence and immanence in Beauvoir's analysis of the character of "agency," therefore, yields another *ambiguity* – that *between the self and the other*. I now turn towards this ambiguity, and its implications for the question of "reciprocity."

Three: Rethinking "Reciprocity" through "Ambiguity": A New Starting Point for Thinking about "Solidarity"

The phenomenology of agency as articulated in the previous section, points towards a fundamental ambiguity in the "border" between the self and other. The nature of one's being cannot be discerned through a soliloquy. It is only through my relationship with the other and in situation, that I am confronted with the realization of my own possibilities as an agent, and my own vulnerabilities as a situated being. The increasing emphasis on "ethical freedom" from *The Ethics of Ambiguity* through *The Second Sex*, further solidifies this fact. In this section, I reconceptualize the concept of "reciprocity" in light of my analysis of "ambiguity."

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At this point, I would like to further clarify my use of the term, *"agency."* Self-determination that is made possible in the absence of certain constraints is, of course, an aspect and marker of agency.[80] The lived experience of agency is also tied to specific temporal-spatial orientations of moving beyond the given, that is, of trying to exceed an act of containment toward a future not yet disclosed. In the *"Introduction"* to *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir writes,

> [t]here is no other justification for present existence than its expansion toward an indefinitely open future. ... Every individual concerned with justifying his existence experiences his existence as an indefinite need to transcend himself. (2010, 16-17)

As an action, therefore, the exercise of agency is about questioning and exceeding limits, along with the borders that stipulate these limits. Andrea Veltman, in fact, identifies the use of the term "transcendence" in the sense of "constructive or creative work," (Veltman, 116) as being a distinct contribution of Beauvoir, and one that is absent in Sartre's use of the term She summarizes Beauvoir's view of "transcendence" in these words,

> The nature of transcendence is active movement, perpetual surpassing, or going beyond the given; and transcendence is thus truly achieved... in some endeavor that moves an individual beyond the present status quo toward an open future. (Veltman 2006, 117)

The contrary of transcendence, viz. confinement to "immanence," is equivalent to negating one's own freedom. Beauvoir gives us a clear statement of this when she writes,

> Every time transcendence lapses into immanence, there is a degradation of existence into the "in-itself," of freedom into facticity; this fall is a moral fault if the subject consents to it; if this fall is inflicted on the subject, it takes the form of … oppression." (2010, 16)

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[80] It must be noted that the self in question is already a relational self that is constituted as an agential subjectivity through its relation with the other. Therefore, "self-determination" has a different connotation from a liberal understanding of the idea.

The phenomenology of agency as revealed through an analysis of "transcendence" and "immanence" is one of perpetual movement and action, or at least the potential for action. As transcending towards the unknown and unfamiliar, it puts us in a crisis zone – one of anxiety, fear, and so on. Yet, the possibilities it furnishes for curiosity, novelty, etc. is what makes creativity possible. In this way, it becomes associated with the power to do things and *make the world* through one's actions. In this sense, it is a method not just of *existential mediation*, but also *intervention* and *provocation*. I take this aspect of world-making very seriously in discussions of agency. World-making must be understood in the context of the kinds of possibilities that are opened up as a result of the action, and by the sort of grip that it provides on the future. Of course, this experience of agency and making the world is not an individual process. We cannot simply be agents in our heads – our appeals must be acknowledged and responded to by others.

I think that when we pay serious attention to the ambiguous character of agency, we realize that agency and its possibilities are neither located purely in the self, nor purely in the other. The self plays as much a role in the constitution of the other, as the other plays a role in the constitution of the self. This approach to subjectivity and agency highlights the reciprocal tie between the self and the other – a *reciprocity* that is rooted in our fused existence as freedom and flesh. The reciprocity is in terms of our vulnerability and potential for transcendence as agents. It is in terms of our abilities to mediate and make each other's worlds, to provoke each other into being a certain way.

An approach to the self/other relation with an acute awareness of the ambiguity of the border between them, therefore, demands of us specific modes of relating. It pushes

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us to actively engage both the points of connection and separation between the self and the other at the same time, within the particularities of their situations. By emphasizing both our freedom and vulnerability as agents in relation to one another, ambiguity enables us to break out of the dichotomous language of "subject" and "object" as the dominant lens for looking at inter-subjective relations. Ambiguity stipulates that *one relate as a subject-object to another subject-object*, where *"subject-object"* is used as a *fused category* unlike "subject/object" as two mutually incompatible modes of being. Reciprocity, therefore, has a phenomenology of the border that is effective in subverting processes of *radical* othering that tend to issue in relations of domination and antagonism, while still preserving the otherness of the other.[81] I find this to be one of the chief values of this concept in the context of inter-subjective and even inter-group relations.

Of course, as we become aware of the reciprocal tie between the self and the other, we also realize that there is no final reconciliation. The reciprocity in question is always precarious and in need of more work. An awareness of the power we exercise in relation to the other and the power that the other exercises over us, however, in the very least situates us as being important and essential to each other. Denial of reciprocity means closing off this possibility even before actual engagement or encounter begins. This runs into the danger of mystifying power hierarchies and translating into relations of domination. After all, as Bergoffen puts it, Beauvoir recognizes that rendering the other

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[81] I explore the connection between radical othering and relations of domination through an analysis of regressive identities in Chapter I.

How "reciprocity" succeeds in preserving the otherness of the other without making them radically other in the process, will be discussed further in the final pages of this chapter when I take up the concept of "vulnerability" and the "blind spot" that it reveals.

as "non-subject" bars the other from entering the "dialectic of reciprocity" to begin with. (1997, 176).[82]

In fact, one of the mechanisms through which a non-reciprocal orientation towards inter-subjective relations perpetuates relations of domination is that it first and foremost diffuses the other's status as subject. Rendering the other "inessential" through such diffusion, then, facilitates her reduction to generality – to someone who is not "this" or "that" being, but who simply "is." Stripped of the specific attributes that makes a person an individual and a certain kind of agent, justifies their dehumanization and oppression.[83] This seems to be a fundamental concern of Beauvoir too as she writes,

> But she (woman) is All in that which is inessential: she is wholly the *Other*. … Being all, she is never exactly *this* that she should be; she is everlasting disappointment, the very disappointment of existence that never successfully attains or reconciles itself with the totality of existents. (2010, 213)

The remark highlights the complex connection between generality, radical alterity, and subjugation. Although Beauvoir herself does not phrase it this way, I think that her phenomenology of oppression is helpful in taking us beyond viewing the main problem with a logic of radical alterity as being that it is a dualistic logic. It effectively exposes the potential of this logic in situations of oppression to translate into one of "*non*reciprocal

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[82] In this context, Bergoffen refers to Beauvoir's analysis of the fate of women in *The Second Sex*. She writes, "Woman is placed outside the dialectic of reciprocity because her body has been given the mark of the non-subject." (Bergoffen 1997, 176) Being marked thus, implies being rendered eternally immanent and closes off any possibility of transcendence once and for all. As Beauvoir writes, "To posit the Woman is to posit the absolute Other, without reciprocity, refusing, against experience, that she could be a subject, a peer." (2010, 266) Denial of reciprocity in this way, serves to uphold and justify the relation of gender domination in this case. I think that a similar analysis could apply in various other instances of domination and colonization such as in the case of racial dominance, the dominance of institutions and structures of the first world in processes of globalization, and so on.

[83] I find the reduction of slave women to the role of "producers" and "reproducers" as Dorothy Roberts points out in *Killing the Black Body*, or viewing native women's bodies as "dirty bodies" as Andrea Smith points out in *Conquest*, clear instances of this particular mechanism through which the politics of oppression manifests itself.

objectification,"[84] which occurs through the diffusion of one's status as subject. Such non-reciprocal objectification is rendered possible because claims about hierarchy are implicit in the essential/inessential distinction that is part and parcel of this logic.[85] As a consequence, I think that one of its chief problems is that this logic succeeds in mystifying existing *material non-reciprocity* into *abiding non-reciprocity*. Bestowing normative force to "non-reciprocity," therefore, can potentially set in motion trajectories of praxis that only accentuate the inequalities already in place. It threatens to lead us into problematic kinds of power relations.

I have discussed "reciprocity" so far in terms of an embodied orientation, which is based on the ambiguous character of agency, and the ambiguity of the border between the self and the other. It is precisely the materiality of embodiment and the situated nature of inter-subjective relations, which pushes us to take the specificities of our location seriously. To state it otherwise, "reciprocity" is not conceptualized in terms of abstract or ideal qualities such as "human-ness" or "common oppression" that render individuals equal to each other, and tend to cover over inequalities and dependencies within relationships. Rather, it is conceptualized on the basis of aspects of our embodied existence within the realities of our situation. One's power to make the world, or unmake it, is deeply tied to the boundaries (inter-subjective, cultural, etc.) that frame one's

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[84] Sonia Kruks uses this term in "Teaching Sartre About Freedom," 84.

[85] The relationship between becoming general and being reduced to a thing in the process is reiterated further as Beauvoir writes,

> "Appearing as the Other, woman appears at the same time as a plentitude of being by opposition to the nothingness of existence that man experiences in itself; the Other, posited as object in the subject's eyes, is posited as in-itself, thus as being." (2010 161)

In this observation, Beauvoir works with Sartre's distinction between the in-itself (being) and the for-itself (consciousness). Her point of concern is that being reduced to the "plentitude of being" entails reduction to the status of a pure object in the eyes of a pure subject. Becoming a pure object means being deprived of the very potential of asserting oneself as a subject.

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experience of agency. "Possibilities" can never be thought in abstraction from resources, distribution, etc. The specifics of the ways in which we make each other's world or unmake it as agents, deserves a great deal of attention.

"Reciprocity" revisited through "ambiguity," is not a simple contractual relation between pre-formed agents as the liberal paradigm considers it to be, and which has been the source of concern for a wide variety of feminists including postcolonial feminists and care ethicists. Rather, the formation of agents and the emergence of agency occur through this process in a fundamental sense. This demands that we attend to the specifics of the way in which agency manifests itself in a particular case, the means employed for such manifestation, and indeed, the politics involved in the very formation of agents. After all, these factors enable us to distinguish situations of oppression from situations of liberation to begin with. Asymmetry in material situation has a very real impact on agency itself, that is, in determining both its shape and scope. All this demonstrates that *"reciprocity"* revisited through the lens of "ambiguity" does not naturally imply, and is *not necessarily tied to symmetry*.[86] This makes it possible to demand engagement on an equal footing, equal respect for each other, etc. in inter-subjective relations, even as we render visible the various differences, non-reciprocities, and inequalities existing between the parties involved with respect to things such as access to resources, capabilities, dependencies, visibility, amount of economic-political power, etc. In other words, "reciprocity" conceived in an existential phenomenological vein is capable of exposing the nuances of

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[86] Kruks identifies a similar tendency in Beauvoir as opposed to Sartre. She writes, "for Beauvoir, such "reciprocity" is not essentially a relation of *looks*. It is expressed and mediated through *institutions* – institutions as diverse as war, trade, festivals. … For Beauvoir, the slave is not "as free as his master," for the restrictions that operate on his situation come to operate *internally* on his freedom – so as to suppress *his very capacity to project*." (Kruks 1995, 84) This observation, by highlighting the fact that the formation of agents and inter-subjective relations are mediated by institutions, further problematizes the connection between "reciprocity" and "symmetry."

dependencies within relationships - the sorts of things that a liberal take on the concept either covers over, or simply does not concern itself with, as Kittay rightly points out.[87] "Reciprocity" thus conceived, also provides a *sober counterpoint to non-reciprocal objectification*. By doing these, it can serve as a powerful normative basis for questioning and challenging the very inequalities that it is successful in discerning at the same time.

I would like to pause at this point to revisit Sesha's case through the alternative understanding of "reciprocity" developed so far. Of course, Kittay is right that in Sesha's extreme dependency, a basic asymmetry persists between her and her caregivers. Inequality in responsibility, ability, power, etc. obstructs Sesha's engagement with her caregivers on an equal or symmetrical footing, according to any simple benchmark of comparison, and in the sense of any simple give-and-take relation. However, by drawing our attention to the dimension of world-making as a site where agency can manifest itself, and looking closely at the way in which Kittay narrates her relationship to Sesha, I believe that there is no doubt that Sesha makes Kittay and Peggy's worlds in a crucial sense. She constitutes it through her laughter, hugs, tears, sounds, and most importantly, through her capacity to love. Kittay writes of Sesha,

> She is fully human, not a vegetable. Given the scope and breadth of human possibilities and capacities, she occupies a limited spectrum, but she inhabits it fully because she has the most important faculties of all. The capacities for love and for happiness. (1999, 151-2)

Kittay's view of the world, sense of responsibility, identity as a "mother" and "caregiver," memories, dreams, struggles, and tears take shape in Sesha's presence, and

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[87] Reference to my discussion of "ethical freedom" and "freedom-in-situation" in the previous section is useful for this purpose as well. I argued in this section that after all, ontological freedom is not too meaningful without ethical freedom and actually living out an identity as an agent. And of course, when we shift the point of focus from the former to the latter, then the specifics of embodiment including dependencies, inequalities, power differentials, etc. are serious matters of concern.

by virtue of Sesha's embodied intervention in the lives of her caregivers. In Kittay's words, "To *share* in the intimacy of caring for a profoundly needy child is to engage in an intricate and delicate dance – fraught with stubbed toes and broken hearts, but also yielding its own joys and rewards." (1999, 159) Peggy expresses a similar sentiment as she reminiscences about one of her first days with Sesha at a park twenty-three years before, "She (Sesha) had spotted a leaf falling, and she was following its descent. I said 'Thank you for being my teacher, Sesha. I see now. Not my way. Your way. Slowly.'" (Kittay 1999, 157) Sesha's caregivers, in a crucial sense, confront both their possibilities as agents and their vulnerabilities as situated beings, via their relation to Sesha[88], just as Sesha is able to realize her potentials in and through her relation with her caregivers. A simple hug from her caregivers, or even the acknowledgement of a smile from her family, provides Sesha with unique possibilities to live out an identity as a daughter, as a caring being, thus securing her grip on the world every time. It constitutes her as an "individual," and not someone who simply "is" – a being who is capable of generating particular experiences and memories for those she comes into contact with.[89]

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[88] For instance, Kittay writes, "When Sesha is ill… our lives stop." (1999, 158) In this case, undoubtedly the responsibility and power between the caregiver and her charge are unequal; yet at that moment Sesha's illness constituted her caregivers' world in a fundamental sense.

[89] I must mention at this point that I do not intend to challenge a fundamental claim that Kittay and the care ethics tradition of feminist ethics makes, that is, of emphasizing the fact that each individual is some mother's child. I agree that a relational view of the self demands that the caregiver needs care to sustain herself so as to be able to care for her charge, which indicates the transitive nature of the relation (Kittay 1999, 107). In this respect, I endorse Kittay's basic argument for the principle of doulia that argues for an arrangement to ensure care for those who have become needy by virtue of caring for those in need (1999, 106-9), and for various institutions of support and welfare acting as the "*public* conception of *doulia*" (1999, 108) to ensure social justice.

By rethinking "reciprocity" through "ambiguity," however, what I have proposed a different lens for approaching inter-subjective relations that are materially asymmetric or unequal, such as that between the caregiver and the cared for. I have done so with the aim of sufficiently ensuring the agency and vulnerability of both in relation to each other. As I have pointed out earlier in this chapter, in the absence of such emphasis, it is difficult to ground claims against abuse of power, paternalism, and denial of respect. This is because it is a fact that "care" implies an immense power-differential between the caregiver and the cared for, especially in the kinds of cases that care ethics is concerned with. These claims about mutual

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Rethinking "reciprocity" in light of "ambiguity" allows us to overcome the anti-relational, vulnerability-despising culture that does not respect connections and interdependence – a fact that generations of feminists have insisted on. Looking at vulnerability pushes us to pay adequate attention to how otherness is being instituted, whether the vulnerability is being transformed into relations of subordination, and so on. However, the point to note is that "ambiguity" allows us to talk about relationality, vulnerability, and oppression without sacrificing agency in the process – something that feminists of color have considered to be very important, but found lacking in the traditional western liberal feminist analysis of gender oppression. Mohanty writes for example,

> I want to suggest that it is possible to retain the idea of multiple, fluid structures of domination that intersect to locate women differently at particular historical conjunctures, while insisting on the dynamic oppositional agency of individuals and collectives and their engagement in "daily life. (2003, 55)

A concept such as "common oppression," on the contrary, stipulates identities without regard for whether or not it is taken up by actual agents. Leaving a space for some account of agency has been important to feminists of color and especially "Third World" feminists precisely because the focus on the passivity, object status[90], and oppression of "Third World women" has meant not allowing for the possibility of any narrative of

respect and anti-paternalism as I have demonstrated, become especially pertinent when we undertake the task of thinking about transnational ethical praxis between women that are often differentially situated in terms of material dependencies, power, and voice in relation to each other. In this case, drawing attention to the existing reciprocity between them (of course, rethought the way I propose), can serve as a guide for the praxis itself so that it does not degenerate into a site of oppression.

[90] Discussing the specific way in which "women" as a category of analysis functions in Western feminist discourse on women in the Third World, Mohanty writes, "This mode of defining women primarily in terms of their object status (the way in which they are affected or not affected by certain institutions and systems) is what characterizes this particular form of the use of "women" as a category of analysis. In the context of Western women writing/studying women in the Third World, such objectification (however benevolently motivated) needs to be both named and challenged." (Mohanty 2003, 23-4)

agency in their lives. Not only is this account untrue to these women's experience as

Mohanty points out while referring to "oppositional agency," and as will be clear through

my analysis of the experience of transnational surrogates in the final chapter; but it is

problematic for yet another reason. As bell hooks points out in her essay, "Sisterhood,"

the idea of "common oppression" presupposes "shared victimhood." Such a notion

creates a myth of purity that makes it mandatory for women to identify as "victims" in

order to be included in feminism. According to hooks this association has served two

purposes, both to the disadvantage of women of color and poor women. First, it has

successfully excluded and suppressed the voices of certain groups of women, for

instance, black women on the grounds that they are too strong. "Strength" has been used

to leave them out of the purview of "victims" truly speaking. Second, indirectly, it gave

white women an excuse not to confront the complexity of their own experience. In

hooks' words, they could remain complicit about the "enemy within," (2000, 46) that is,

of their own role in perpetuating structures of oppression. Whatever, the problem may be,

these critiques expose the need for preserving a space for narratives of agency even

within contexts of struggle, oppression, and violence.

Ambiguity, on the other hand, leaves open the potential for narratives of agency

even among the most vulnerable, or those that are perceived as being the most vulnerable.

It does so by problematizing the agent/victim dichotomy. This orientation, therefore, has

significant potential for arresting one-sided conversations and setting the tone for serious

engagement and mutual accountability, even among women that are unequally situated

in terms of material realities. At the same time, it is effective in mapping the intricacies of

various inequalities, asymmetries, and oppressive structures in place, that is, in filling in

the details of narratives of oppression by making the manifestation of agency contingent on situation. I will use further resources from pragmatism in the next chapter to argue that acknowledging agency does not necessarily lead us to identify a situation as being an empowering one. In fact, I think that a problem with paradigms for thinking about "victimization" in the language of "common oppression" is that it institutes a strict division between "victims" and "agents." This renders narratives of resistance and narratives of oppression equally thin and simple, and is especially problematic for discerning the complexity of the oppressive and liberatory dimensions of transnational praxis in the globalized world of today.

A fundamental insight of approaching "reciprocity" in terms of "ambiguity" is that the very conditions that establish us as agents (such as others, response from the world, etc.,) also situate us as vulnerable beings. Of course, this has been used by Beauvoir and scholars of Beauvoir alike to argue for a *politics of recognition*. It has also initiated debate between scholars about how far Beauvoir's idea of "reciprocal recognition" resembles that of Hegel and whether Beauvoir ends up giving an original spin to the Hegelian dialectic. The latter debate is beyond the scope of this chapter, but I would like to briefly note Nancy Bauer's observations on this since I see Bauer's reading of the Hegel-Beauvoir relationship in *The Second Sex* as complementing what I argued for in my analysis of "ambiguity" in Beauvoir's work. Bauer identifies both Hegel and Beauvoir as converging on the fact that reciprocal recognition requires us to accept each other as "for-itself," that is, as "subject" or "inalienable freedoms." (2001, 176) However, she goes on to say that unlike Hegel, " … for Beauvoir the risk required for the consummation of Hegelian reciprocal recognition is the risk of allowing the other to be

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genuinely other, which is to say the risk of acknowledging a certain freedom from him –

or her." (Bauer 2001, 176)[91] Therefore, Bauer through her reading of "reciprocal

recognition" in *The Second Sex* comes close to what I have characterized as the need to

relate as subject-object to another subject-object.

The point to note is that a Beauvorian politics of recognition necessitates that the

other be preserved in their otherness. The insistence on the bond between the self and the

other facilitates the transition from an ontology to an ethics of ambiguity for Beauvoir -

an ethics depending crucially on the notions of choice and responsibility to the other.

Since it is "... human existence which makes values spring in the world" (Beauvoir 1976,

15), we must be thoughtful about the choices we make and assume responsibility for

them, while always being aware of the fact that we cannot but choose. The other will be

capable of responding to me only if I respond to them and create for them situations such

that they are in a position to respond to my appeals.[92] We are obliged as ethical beings, to

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[91] Bauer uses this to argue in favor of Beauvoir's strikingly original twist on the Hegelian dialectic (2001, 186).

     In her essay, "Beauvoir's Heideggerian Ontology," Bauer goes on to locate the desire to maintain a distance between the self and the other, in Beauvoir's appropriation of the Heideggerian notion of "Mitsein" ("being-with" others). This, emphasis on being-with others, however, should not be read as saying that to be human is to reside in a beneficial and caring community. Bauer is quick to draw our attention to Heidegger's use of "das Man" "the 'they' "(2006, 75) as referring to "our tendency to disburden *ourselves* by allowing the *Mitsein* to, as it were, leap in for us." (Bauer 2006, 76) In light of the subtle distinction between das Man and Mitsein, Heidegger foregrounds the importance of "authenticity," which means "figuring out a way to relate to other people that is not 'deficient' or 'indifferent' or characterized by premature 'empathy' or the phenomenon of 'leaping in.'" (Bauer 2006, 76) Beauvoir's appropriation of Heidegger along these lines, Bauer argues, leads her to transform the Hegelian dialectic to include a willingness to submit ourselves to the gaze of the other, along with recognizing each other as subjects.

     In the literature, there are wide divergences in opinion about the comparative influences of Heidegger and Hegel in Beauvoir's work. Bergoffen, for instance, argues that Beauvoir sets the ethics of the bond of the Mitsein aside for a Hegelian project of recognition (1997, 172), while Bauer seems to identify both as Beauvoir's intellectual influences and works through the influence in some of the ways mentioned, among others.

[92] Since our freedoms "support each other like stones in an arch" (Beauvoir 2004, 140), an element of mutual respect becomes essential. As Beauvoir points out, "I must... strive to create for men situations such that they can accompany and surpass my transcendence. (2004, 137)

work towards the creation of a more just material and political order.[93] As Beauvoir notes, "One finds himself back at the anguish of free decision. And that is why political choice is an ethical choice: it is a wager as well as a decision...." (1976, 148)

While discussing the intersection of ethics and politics in Beauvoir, Fredrika Scarth emphasizes the perpetual blind spot in the self in light of the recognition of one's own vulnerability and openness to the other. By drawing attention to this, Scarth celebrates the *ethic of otherness within* as an aspect of Beauvoir's philosophy. She writes, "In contrast to most Western ethics, which is premised on finding the self in the other, Beauvoir demands that we acknowledge the other in the self." (Scarth 2004, 163)[94] Scarth locates the beginnings of a non-assimilationist politics of liberation in this ethics of otherness within. In her words, "If we take her (Beauvoir's) conception of embodied freedom and her ethic of otherness within seriously, then we are faced with the difficult political work of assuming otherness within the self rather than projecting the self onto the other." (Scarth 2004, 169-70) In short, the ethics of otherness within oneself, shifts the focus of politics from being one that is concerned with projecting the self on the other so as to make the latter one's mirror image to one that works on assuming the meanings and obligations of the split within oneself.

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[93] Thus Beauvoir writes, "To want existence, to want to disclose the world, and to want men to be free are one and the same will." (1976, 86-7)

[94] Using resources from the psychoanalytic tradition, Julia Kristeva too emphasizes the other within oneself in her book, *Strangers to Ourselves*. She too stresses the psychological predisposition towards others that such recognition can yield. At this point, her claim complements my analysis. However, comparisons between Beauvoir and Kristeva's positions on this question are not central to my argument in this chapter. Fredrika Scarth's engages Beauvoir and Kristeva together at several points in her book, *The Other Within: Ethics, Politics, And The Body In Simone De Beauvoir*.

Scarth's emphasis on the ethics of otherness within starts us on a fruitful path. However, I think there is more potential in the concept of "ambiguity" as discussed in this chapter and that the recognition of vulnerability within oneself along with the agency of the other succeeds in achieving yet another task. The other is an agent whose existential choices, decisions, and actions are enabled and constrained by the nuances of her own situation. In that case, there is no way to tell in what way, and even whether, she will respond to my appeals. Being an agent-in-situation, therefore, makes the other always retain a degree of unpredictability (a gap) with respect to the self. The most important function that I see this particular *"blind spot"* as performing in inter-subjective interactions is that it helps to highlight and maintain a *degree of incommensurability between the self and the other.*

It must be noted that the liberal notion of "reciprocity" as I demonstrated in Section One of this chapter, ties "reciprocity" too tightly with claims about "symmetry" and "commensurability." I argued that this has been a crucial source of worry for postcolonial feminists and feminists of color and most of their critiques target this connection. Earlier in this section, I already demonstrated that "reciprocity" does not imply symmetry. This reiterates the lack of a straightforward connection between "reciprocity" and "commensurability." Emphasis on the "blind spot" that is revealed by reconceptualizing "reciprocity" through "ambiguity" enables us to further problematize the connection between "reciprocity" and "commensurability" so as to preserve the strangeness of the other.

The way in which "reciprocity" has been conceptualized so far accommodates incommensurability between agents in interactive contexts. Indeed, it recognizes the

tremendous potential of the blind spot in the very formation of agents and the lived

experience of agency on their part. The dissociation of reciprocity from symmetry and

commensurability, and acknowledging the blind spot, also complicates our reading of

"recognition." "Recognition" is not an easy task when otherness needs to be preserved,

and the other is not simply taken as the mirror image of the self. In fact, attributing

importance to the blind spot within and without demands that we maintain a certain

degree of humility in relation to it, and that we listen carefully and attend to it.

"Reciprocity" reconceived along with its implicit ethics of otherness, therefore, has great

potential in anchoring what I consider to be an *"ethics of humility."*[95]

      An ethics of humility, truly speaking, is a border ethics. It is rooted in the

recognition of borders and differences, both inside and outside the self. An ethical

orientation of humility as "a way of casting oneself into the world," to use a phrase from

Beauvoir (1976, 41), can provide important direction to a politics of recognition. Indeed,

if we agree with Bauer's observation that what is exacting about reciprocal recognition is

not the "lodging" of the demand but the "maintenance of it" (2001, 189), then humility

can become a strong guiding light in the messy task of recognition. This is because it

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[95] In my reading and development of the concept of "ambiguity," I place a lot of weight on "vulnerability" just as I do on the various dimensions of the exercise of freedom. At this time, I withhold making claims regarding whether my position is perfectly aligned with Beauvoir. This is due to the fact that, although Beauvoir talks a lot about vulnerability (especially in the context of "situation" and "ethical freedom" as I discussed in Section Two of this chapter), she continues to maintain a somewhat ambiguous stance on the status of "ontological freedom." Consequently, it is not uncommon to assume "ontological freedom" as being something substantive. However, in light of my emphasis on "ethical freedom" and the concept of "situation" in discussions of Beauvoir's perspective on agency, my reading (provided in Section Two of this chapter) challenges a substantive view of "ontological freedom." I attribute a great deal of importance to the element of vulnerability, and this leads me to derive an ethics of humility (hand-in-hand with an ethics of recognition) from an ethics of ambiguity. I think that an ethical orientation of humility can provide important direction to the praxis of recognition in ethical-political contexts.

reminds us that recognition is not an uncomplicated task and that true recognition must engage what can be recognized along with that which cannot be recognized. It must be willing to give proper place to that which escapes description and must be willing to learn from this gap (the kind that Schutte also emphasizes), rather than trying to overcome it. When we attribute sufficient significance to vulnerability as an aspect of reciprocity, then there is significant potential to prevent an abuse of power within relations between agents. Rethinking recognition in the framework of an ethics of humility, therefore, can be a very productive ground for thinking about "solidarity" and enable us to have a more thoughtful attitude to any act of caring in a world that is marked by institutional inequalities and personal prejudices. Humility can potentially prevent care from dissolving into the wrong sorts of relations and attitudes. In the following chapter, I work on developing further resources for ensuring solidarity, preventing the abuse of power in the context of concrete material interactions between agents, and for further enriching an ethics of humility.

CHAPTER V

SISTERHOOD IS WORK: "SOLIDARITY" AS

"INTEGRATION" AND THE QUESTION OF

TRANSNATIONAL FEMINIST FUTURES

In the previous chapter, I developed an alternative lens for thinking about "reciprocity," based on the phenomenological concept of "ambiguity." Ambiguity does two important things. It recognizes our vulnerability as agents and leaves open the potential for agency even in the most vulnerable. The experience of agency is often tied to the power to determine ourselves and freely make choices without others imposing on our wills. This ability can be called "sovereignty."[96] "Sovereignty," in the sense of "being able to determine oneself," implies a kind of power over one's self. The description of agency that I have provided so far expands its scope from the power to determine oneself, to include other aspects such as the power to make the world through one's actions, open up new possibilities, and so on.[97] The power to choose and to be able to do things without constraints, incidentally, has been central to the understanding of "agency" and "empowerment" in the context of various liberation and social justice movements.[98]

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[96] Follett uses the terminology of "sovereignty" in *The New State*. For her, power at the most basic level is the ability to act, which is obstructed in the presence of coercion.

[97] In her book *The Power of Feminist Theory*, Amy Allen also talks about "power-to." She defines it as "the ability to of an individual actor to attain an end or a series of ends." (Allen 1999, 126) The way I approach power-to includes this aspect, but expands it further to signify existential mediation and the ability to make the world through one's actions.

[98] In her essay "Black Women Shaping Feminist Theory," bell hooks describes "oppression" in terms of the "*absence of choices*." (2000, 5). Citing this quote from hooks, Schutte endorses a similar position. She writes, "I take this to mean that oppression involves conditions in which persons are deprived of agency, or that their options are limited to those that effectively fail to promote their own good." (Schutte 2000, 61).

The analysis so far also emphasizes that our power as individual agents depends upon our "power-with"[99] others in a fundamental sense. I adopt Follett's understanding of "power-with" as "co-active power," that is, as "jointly developed power" (Follett 1982b, 72) In fact, the ambiguity of the lived experience of agency diffuses the subject/object dichotomy within ourselves. The fact that each agent is freedom and flesh at the same time reminds us of our dependence on others in our capacity as free agents and vulnerable beings. It safeguards us from locating the potential for agency too heavily on one end of an intersubjective relation. We recognize the immense creative and destructive potentials of the boundary space between two agents and the need for an ethics that successfully navigates this boundary. "Ambiguity," therefore, exposes the need for working with the other in the context of inter-subjective relationships, that is, the need for some notion of "solidarity" within such relationships to enable one's agency.

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[99] It must be noted that the term "power-with," and the distinction between "power-over" and "power-with" have now become very popular in feminist theory. Mary Parker Follett, however, first introduced this distinction in these terms, in 1925 in her paper titled "Power." I find Jane Mansbridge's foreword titled "Mary Parker Follett: Feminist and Negotiator" very helpful for understanding the genealogy of the terms and this distinction. Mansbridge credits Follett as having first introduced these. In this respect, she cites Dorothy Emmet's reference to this distinction in her presidential address from 1953 to the Aristotelian Society, and Emmet's attribution of the distinction to Follett. (1998, xviii) Mansbridge's account is also helpful in tracing the connection between Follett's perspective and that of later feminists or women philosophers from diverse traditions who propose the same distinction, or a similar take on "power." The list includes philosophers such as Hannah Arendt, Nancy Hartsock, Starhawk, and so on. Mansbridge points out that, interestingly enough, Follett's name often gets lost in the genealogy of these terms. Amy Allen's more recent comprehensive book-length project on the conception of power in feminist theory engages aspects of this distinction without referencing this genealogy. To the extent I engage Follett, therefore, I hope that some of her own contributions to this literature will become clear.

In this chapter, my focus in not on developing a theory of "power." However, my analysis of "solidarity" and "integration" is done in light of the distinction between "power-over" and "power-with" as articulated within a Folletian ontology and, in turn, provide valuable insight into the question of "power." For my project, I am interested in looking to Follett specifically because her analysis of "power-with" points us to a specific method for approaching conflict, namely, "integration." It is this concept that I am interested in exploring and developing for the purposes of feminist ethical-political praxis across borders. I analyze the theoretical and methodological commitments of integration and engage it so as to develop it as a resource for responding to third wave feminist dilemmas about "solidarity."

At this point I would like to go back to some of my central observations in Chapter III on the nature of "individuality." On the basis of the pragmatist concept of "betweenness," I had argued that every individual, in turn, is an "activity-between." As activity-between she emerges in the context of various relations and becomes a relation with an ordering capacity. The ordering capacity of an individual can be considered to be yet another marker of agency. As an ordering relation, she constantly finds herself in larger processes.[100] My main intention in working with "betweenness" was to highlight the fact that, not only do two entities within a dyadic structure (including inter-subjective relations conceived along dualistic terms) co-constitute each other, but that the genesis and nature of a dyad cannot be captured in purely dyadic terms. I used a conception of "individuality," formulated in light of the "betweenness" relation, to theorize the relationship between an individual human agent and the group or collectives she is part of, and also to problematize definitions of "groups" from the perspective of a liberal theory of the individual.

When an individual is understood as an "activity-between," then the potential for agency gets distributed not just between individual human agents within inter-subjective relations (a point that has been central to an existential phenomenological understanding of "reciprocity" as articulated in the previous chapter), but also between individual human agents and the group or groups that she emerges as a part of, between the individual and her environment, between different groups, between a group and aspects

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[100] In defining an "organism," Follett observes that it is a mistake to speak of "the completely integrated organism." Rather, in her words, "the organism is the continuing activity of self-organizing, self-maintaining." (1924, 58) The distinction is between viewing the organism as a complete, static, substance to viewing it as a dynamic process or activity. The shift in definition marks a huge shift in ontology at the same time.

of its environment, and so on. An important implication of this framework is that questions about the agency of "individual" human agents are not simply concerns for that particular agent. Moreover, "groups" as "collectives" are not transcendental unities, but denote collective agency that emerges in the context of the intersection and interweaving of multiple agents. As formative and mediatory factors in the lives of individual human agents, and as activities that have ordering capacities, groups come to exercise a certain kind of agency. This very capacity to be agents makes them open and vulnerable at the same time. The desire to be recognized, respected, acknowledged, and empowered are, therefore, concerns for group agents as much as they are for individual human agents. The point I want to emphasize is that, if our capacity to be individual agents is contingent on power with other agents in a fundamental sense, then questions of individual "empowerment" and "sovereignty" (whether an individual human agent or a collective) becomes directly linked to the question of "solidarity."[101] In this scenario, I think that to understand *"solidarity,"* truly speaking, is also to understand how to evolve *co-active power*. An effective and robust theory of evolving such power should be able to provide us with valuable insight into "solidarity," and conversely.

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[101] I must note at this point, that there are a diverse range of perspectives for thinking about "empowerment" within feminist contexts and other social justice movements. Because of their varied perspectives on the definition of "power" itself, they often propose conflicting approaches for responding to oppressive power-differentials. Some of these include, but are not limited to thinking about "empowerment" as being a matter of redistributing power, or of dismantling power structures completely (always negative), or of reversing existing power-structures and putting power in the hands of the oppressed. Yet, others think that "empowerment" is an ever-elusive term, truly speaking, as the operation of external power shapes us to such an extent that we are simply implicated in it and that agency becomes an elusive term. I resist from the urge of engaging all these perspectives in detail at this point, since this is not central to my main argument. Instead, and given my focus on "solidarity," I engage questions about "power" and "empowerment" only to the extent to which these are pertinent to concerns about "solidarity." The concept that I find most useful for approaching all these questions and understanding the relation between them is "integration." I deal with this concept in depth within this chapter. Amy Allen's book again, is a good resource for feminist theories about power.

In Section One, I highlight some of the popular moves that happen in name of "feminist solidarity." In light of my critique of these tendencies, I argue for framing the issue of "solidarity" as a "problem of boundaries." I think that this formulation helps clarify further what is at stake in any demand for "solidarity." I discuss additional problems with some of the popular methods of dealing with differences and conflicts to ensure solidarity in Section Two. This reiterates the need for coming up with new tools and methods for dealing with "solidarity" as a "boundary problem." I introduce "integration" in Section Three for this purpose. I conclude the chapter with reflections on how integration is both an effective method for actualizing solidarity and provides valuable insight into what is involved in decolonizing praxes of solidarity. By doing so, it can add to discussions of "solidarity" in feminist and postcolonial contexts. I also argue in favor of the potential of integration to enrich an ethics of humility, which I argued for in the previous chapter.

One: Reformulating the Problem of "Solidarity" as a "Boundary Problem," and Failure of Popular Approaches to "Solidarity" to Address the Boundary Problem

In order to clarify the concept of "solidarity," it is important to outline some of the things that tend to go on in the name of feminist "solidarity" across differences. In the previous chapter, I already outlined the common critiques of a liberal conception of "solidarity," based on the idea of "common oppression." Common oppression was argued for on the basis of an implicit gender essentialism, which assumed symmetry and commensurability between women. An essential "womanhood," therefore, functioned as the adhesive that bound women together as "sisters," despite their differences. Postcolonial feminist insights questioned these very foundations of the liberal conception

of "solidarity." By challenging the presence of such an essence that can bind women into a sisterhood and by emphasizing the specificity of identities, they negate an approach to "solidarity" that takes it to be given.

Postcolonial critiques expose two other problematic dimensions of the liberal notion of "sisterhood." First, they expose how the agenda of the idea of "solidarity" based on a liberal notion of "sisterhood," has been exclusionary. It ends up being a mechanism of *domination*, in so far as it renders invisible all that does not serve its interests. Second, in order to be identified as feminists, be engaged in feminist conversations, or even to fall within the purview of feminist issues and agendas, women often had to put other aspects of their identity on hold at the altar of a predetermined notion of "womanhood." This meant willing to uncritically embrace, or as I view it, *consent* to the idea and categories of hegemonic feminisms such as the category of "victims" as discussed in the previous chapter. Such consent often meant acting in opposition to and *suppressing* their own intuitions and lived experience. This is especially problematic for those women for whom other aspects of their identity are intimately tied to their gendered existence and, in fact, sometimes takes precedence over the latter. Bernice Johnson Reagon points out that women "have been organized to have our primary cultural signals come from some other factors than that we are women. We are not from our base acculturated to be women people, capable of crossing our first people boundaries – Black, White, Indian, etc." (*Home Girls*, "Coalition Politics") In more recent times, Islamic scholar Maysam J. Al Faruqi, indicates a popular tendency on the part of people outside the Islamic faith to define "Muslim womanhood" "on a basis that has nothing to do with Islam." (2000, 73-4) She points out that this is especially problematic for self-declared Muslim women, for

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whom Islam is not an " 'additional' ideological superstructure" (Al-Faruqi 2000, 74), but

the first source of identity. In her words,

> [w]hat becomes of the self-identity of the Muslim woman, reduced here to a
> universal concept of womanhood, battered by a universal concept of manhood
> along universal lines of cultural patriarchal oppression that can be identified by a
> "universal" list of human rights and be fought by universal measures …? These
> approaches are unsatisfactory to the Muslim because they fail to identify her real
> problem, and they therefore fail to provide adequate solutions. (Al-Faruqi 2000,
> 74)

Interestingly enough, some perspectives that dispute "common oppression" across

group-differences, still issue rigid demands for "solidarity" within a particular group.

Reifying intersectionality, and a lapse into aggressive communitarianism are the primary

reasons behind this. These are the kinds of cases that Al-Faruqi seems to have in mind

when she talks about perspectives that put all the blame for problems within one's groups

on "external abuses" (2000, 72), that is, on peoples and things outside it. If goals and

expectations of what it means to be a "woman" in a particular group are stipulated in

advance within that group, and individuals have to buy into these in order to be included,

"solidarity" within a particular group also ends up being a *compromise* for a number of

women. When any criticism or claim to the contrary is considered blasphemy, then

"solidarity" again becomes a means of *domination*. No wonder, bell hooks makes the

case that solidarity is not only pertinent for theorizing relations between women

belonging to different groups, but is equally necessary for intra-group relations when we

take heterogeneity inside a group seriously.

I would like to note that the concept of "solidarity," when thus formulated is also

a problem of "boundaries." For instance, by articulating problems with understanding

Muslim women through the lens of a universal "womanhood," Al-Faruqi cautions us

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against subsuming the various problems that Muslim women face to a generalized feminist language of universal patriarchal oppression. She acknowledges that Muslim women face "very real problems of social, economic, and political oppression," (Al-Faruqi 2000, 72) but at the same time emphasizes the fact that definitions and solutions of these problems must not negate or overlook Muslim women's identity as women in Islam. On the contrary, reducing all critique to "heresy" or *"kufr"*(Al-Faruqi 2000, 73) is equally oppressive. Although Al-Faruqi is mainly concerned with religious boundaries, her insight is important for some other boundaries that divide groups as well. In fact, religious borders themselves often come with specific cultural, linguistic, national, and other markers.

Al-Faruqi's concerns reinstate my claim that an effective theory of building "solidarity" is, in a crucial sense, about learning to negotiate borders and differences in a way that both transcends and preserves them. Transgression of boundaries and differences is required to establish connections, redistribute resources, and facilitate ethical dialogue across differences. However, retaining them is equally necessary for the health of the individual and for preserving the sanctity of particularized experience. The picture of agency developed so far stipulates that both the complete elimination of borders, and the rigid institution of these implies death for solidarity and agency.

While highlighting the problems with a simplified notion of "solidarity," theorists such as hooks still want to preserve some notion of a cooperative praxis that does not degenerate into a colonizing and manipulative agenda.[102] I endorse the latter tendency of

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[102] It is impossible to provide an exhaustive list of feminists who want to preserve a model of cooperation and collaboration. Some of whom I am particularly drawn to are bell hooks, Chandra Mohanty, Uma Narayan, and Ofelia Schutte.

not sacrificing solidarity at the altar of complete incommensurability and radical difference.[103] By reinstating the need for "solidarity" at the very heart of feminist liberatory praxis across and amidst differences, hooks asks us to envision "solidarity" in a way that learns to take differences between women seriously. She states categorically, "Women do not need to eradicate differences to feel solidarity." (hooks 2000, 67) In other words, we need to ensure that even when sisterhood is perceived as a goal to be achieved and not as a given, becoming sisters does not end up sacrificing one's life as an agent with interests, desires, and goals.

By approaching the problem of "solidarity" as also being a problem of "boundaries," I highlight the fact that an effective tool for mobilizing "difference" so as to render the kind of "solidarity" possible that hooks et al draw our attention to should also be able to respond adequately to the boundary problem. Domination, compromise, and consent clearly fail to be adequate responses to it, as revealed by the above analysis. Additional problems with these methods of dealing with differences and conflicts will be discussed in the next section, which reiterates the urgency of coming up with new tools and methods.

Two: Additional Problems with Some Models for Thinking about "Solidarity": A Follettian Analysis

If we are to actualize collaborative feminist praxis across differences without sacrificing the latter, then we need effective methods for dealing with differences and various conflicts that differences can entail. Domination, compromise, consent, etc. are among some of the more popular methods of dealing with differences and conflicts. In

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[103] I argued in earlier chapters that the perspective on "radical difference" is based on a particular ontology of "borders," which takes these to be rigid. In chapters II and III, I sought to overturn this ontology and provide a different logical-ontological framework for thinking about "borders."

the previous section, I articulated how some of these often tend to pass in the name of "solidarity." Apart from the problems mentioned above with these methods, I will discuss some additional problems that these run into by engaging and developing insights from Mary Parker Follett. I think that her perspective can add significantly to our understanding of these methods as we struggle with differences in contexts of transnational cooperation and exchange.

A crucial problem with domination as a method of negotiating differences is the mechanism through which it operates. Domination operates through the erasure of agency on one end of the relationship. This approach works with the assumption that difference is necessarily a matter of conflict and uncreative, and hence, must be suppressed or negated. Although effective in the instant, suppression almost never is a long-term solution perhaps because, as Follett would say, difference is a fact of life. Moreover, due to the submission of one agent to the other, the kind of power evolved through it can never be co-active. In their "Introduction" to *Dynamic Administration*, Fox and Urwick observe that for Follett, persuasion in most cases is also a form of domination "in so far as the persuader wishes to get others to go his way without any intention of changing his own view." (1982 xxviii)

Compromise is a way of dealing with conflict without the use of brute force, unlike domination. Follett describes it as the process in which "each side gives up a little in order to have peace, or, to speak more accurately, in order that the activity which has been interrupted by the conflict may go on." (1982a, 2) Compromise is the most common method in collective bargaining. This is a step forward from domination in the sense that it does not dismiss differences outright. However, there are two basic problems with this

method. First, compromise means that desires and interests still have to be given up or suppressed in order for the conflict to be resolved. Giving up desires prevents them from being at peace with the solution. Such dissatisfaction can only "crystallize"[104] the differences, and instigates further conflict. The second problem is that, in situations where the parties know that they have to compromise, they often do not let their true desires surface. And Follett is right to note that such "ignorance is a great barrier to dealing with conflict fruitfully." (1982a, 2) I think that there is an additional problem with compromise. The primary aim of compromise is to put an end to the conflict as soon as possible, rather than to diffuse existing power imbalances or even question these. Consequently, the most vulnerable end up giving up much more in any process of compromise. Therefore, more often than not, compromise really ends up being "sham reconciliation" (Follett 1924, 156). Due to this, it tends to become another instance of coercive power.

Yet another way in which differences are dealt with without explicit coercion is through consent. Consent, in fact, is considered to be at the heart of contractual relations, a more democratic process, and something that gets a lot of weight in the context of utilitarian alliances. Follett points out that "consent" usually signifies "assent." And the ballot-box system is the most popular way of securing such assent when multiple agents are involved. Such a method of unification, for Follett, always has the danger of suppressing the minority voice. In her words, "In a power-society, however, it is the desire of the dominant classes which by the sorcery of consent becomes 'the will of the people.'" (Follett 1924, 209) Although having the appearance of co-active power, such

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[104] Follett speaks of differences crystallizing and becoming pathological in her critique of "compromise." (1982a, 6)

power is no more than coercive power. This danger pervades a ballot-box system, whether it is adopted in political institutions such as a state or institutions for social justice such as regional, national, or global feminist alliances. A ballot box, more often than not, becomes a way of leveling out differences and overriding wills. The "sorcery" of consent is better understood as a mechanism of inclusion in which some become subservient to others rather than a dynamic process of engagement among wills. It, therefore, covertly shares the same psychology and philosophy as that of coercion. Finally, assent takes an additive approach towards evolving co-active power. An aggregate of individual wills becomes the foundation of power in this case.[105] Neither the conditions of consent, nor the situation in which one chooses to consent is interrogated. This makes "empowerment" seem too easy and simple a matter.

The basic problem with domination, compromise, and consent from a Folletian perspective is that we tend to be stuck with what we began with in all these cases. In her words, "In either (domination or compromise) … you rearrange existing material, you make quantitative not qualitative adjustments, you adjust but do not create." (Follett 1924, 46) This is probably why all critique and contradiction comes across as heresy. As such, they all, truly speaking become instances of coercive power or "power-over" (others) in Follett's sense (Follett 1982b, 72). Again, this is why these are never really long-term solutions, and the same conflict resurfaces again in a more accentuated form.

In light of the fact that all these methods of dealing with differences end up being instances of coercive power in the long run, I identify a further problem with these.

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[105] Follett writes, "What vitiated the social contract theory was that assent, mere assent, was in that theory the foundation of power. When we are able to see ourselves as integral part of that process which at one moment and from one aspect we call… cooperative association … we shall see consent is hardly the proper word." (1924, 222)

Coercive power as a model for thinking about "power," yields a powerful/powerless

dichotomy that is particularly problematic for projects of liberation. In fact, when agency

and "power" are understood through the lenses of a simple "power-over" scheme, then

the best response to ending oppression is to invert the existing power structure. However,

as Mohanty points out in her critique of a binary analysis of "power" (although she does

not connect it to "power-over" as I have discussed it),

> If relations of domination and exploitation are defined in terms of binary divisions – groups that dominate and groups that are dominated – then surely the implication is that the accession to power of women as a group is sufficient to dismantle the existing organization of relations. But women as a group are not in some sense essentially superior or infallible. (2003, 39)

In light of Mohanty's observation, we start to see that simply inverting the

existing power structure does nothing to promote larger ethical issues of justice. This is

due to the fact that the "power-over" structure that results in a dichotomy between the

powerful and the powerless, along with the oppression that such a dichotomy entails, is

still preserved. Moreover, no individual person or group has a claim to any absolutely

pure standpoint. This, along with the persistence of a binary structure, greatly enhances

the chances of new "masters" to make "slaves" of the previous ones. What is required,

therefore, is a more complex understanding of "power" itself, and the need to loosen its

tie with coercion while strengthening it with co-action. More importantly, we need

different methods for actualizing such co-active power.

Three: "Integration": Analyzing the Character of the Process and Responding to the Boundary Problem

The concept of "recognition" and an "ethics of humility," as articulated in the

previous chapter, offer a productive starting-ground for fostering "solidarity" while

preserving the integrity of the individuals involved. In fact, by distributing the potential for agency and the potential for vulnerability on both sides of any inter-subjective relationship, an ethical orientation of humility can give important direction to a politics of recognition. It calls our attention to the context in which agents emerge and forces us to consider the kind of resources, power-relations, etc. in place in the context of lived inter-subjective relationships. However, interrogating the conditions for the possibility of agency and the nuances of the vulnerability in each case also opens us up to various differences and inequalities that are present in an actual lived relationship. This is due to the fact that instances of power with other agents can also be instances of power-over them within the context of lived relationships, depending on how each is positioned with respect to the other within the relation and the kind of action that has been initiated between them. This situation gives rise to a crucial question: what can we do with the differences involved such that the potential for building "solidarity" in the sense of "power-with" is heightened and the chances of using the situation as an excuse for exerting power-over the most vulnerable is reduced? I evoke the concept of *"integration"* for harnessing differences in order to yield the kind of power-with that benefits participants (whether individual human agents or communities) on both ends of a relationship and is actively evolved in and through the relationship. It is this concept that will be the subject matter of discussion in this section. I will also argue for its effectiveness in dealing more successfully with the boundary problem.

"Integration" is a concept that appears in Mary Parker Follett's book, *Creative Experience*, in 1924. If agents are activities and live out their agency in relation to other agents as activities in relation to their environment with its possibilities and constraints,

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then agency must be understood within the existence of these larger wholes. In fact, the emphasis on "integration" arises in light of the emphasis on "circular response."[106] The ontology of circular response highlights the fact that the total situation is, at once, also an evolving situation – one that is reconfigured by the interactions between the agents, as well as their response to the relation between them. As aspects of evolving situations, agents constantly find themselves as parts of new situations to which they must now respond. Their responses, in turn, are capable of generating further systems of order, that is, new wholes. "Integration" is the process through which one can effectively become a part of new wholes.

"Integration," in turn, requires us to revise our understanding of *"conflict."* Follett understands "conflict" as "the moment of the appearing and focusing of difference" (1982a, 5). Difference includes differences in desires, goals, viewpoints, etc., which agents embody and what constitutes them. Follett's perspective converges with several contemporary feminists and political theorists in that she is unwilling to dismiss "difference" at its face-value. Her work in conflict management and mediation, however, also gave her a deep awareness of both the positive and negative potentials of "difference."

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[106] "Circular response," as is apparent from its discussion in Chapter III, signifies the process through which related entities within a particular situation impact and create each other through and because of their interweaving. Follett notes, following Edwin Holt, that integrative psychology, through its understanding of "response," equips us with a new framework for thinking about the nature of the related entities. Holt contributes the conception of "evolving situation" (Follett 1924, 55) to the prevailing dominant paradigm for viewing response in terms of the "total situation" (Follett 1924, 55). Within psychology, emphasizing "total situation" in a psychological account of "response" meant acknowledging the importance of situation (sometimes also referred to as "object") on the behavior process of the subject. Throwing "evolving situation" in the mix, on the contrary, meant emphasizing the possibility of reciprocal influence between subject and object. What Follett wants us to notice, however, is that not only is one element responding to the other, but it is also responding to the relation between to them. In the midst of these multiple relatings and responses, the situation itself constantly evolves, or is "a-making" to use Follett's term (1924, 102). On this ground, Follett urges that an understanding of the "total situation" is incomplete without looking at the evolving situation at the same time. In other words, "situation" must be understood as a functional unity, which is both open-ended and dynamic in nature.

To begin with, Follett provides interesting insight into some of the confusions surrounding the use of the word, "conflict," on the part of those who wish to abolish it as well as those who wish to retain it. According to her,

> What people often mean by getting rid of conflict is getting rid of diversity, and it is of utmost importance that these should not be considered the same. We may wish to abolish conflict but we cannot get rid of diversity. We must face life as it is and understand that diversity is its most essential feature. … But fear of difference is dread of life itself. (Follett 1924, 300-1)[107]

If difference is a basic fact of life, then a method that tries to circumvent it without confronting it is bound to fail. Of course, the fact that difference is a fact of experience does not make it any less of a challenge. The basic challenge as I have identified it above, is to prevent difference from degenerating into coercive power and transform it into co-active power.

For Follett, integration is the best possible way of evolving the kinds of relations that are conducive to the production of greater functional unities, in the context of which agents come to exercise agency and yield co-active power. What we designate as a "community of interest" or "collective will" needs to be such a functional whole - a new level of desire that is constituted through the affirmation and integration of diverse desires. Domination and compromise fail to evolve this kind of functional unity, since the modes of suppression and sacrifice they resort to fail to activate the agency of each agent involved. However, for true co-active power to be evolved "we do not want either side to sacrifice its interests for we want nothing lost, we want all the interests to be united." (Follett 1924, 171) In Follett's words,

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[107] David Schlosberg in his paper, "Resurrecting the Pluralist Universe," identifies Follett's unique contribution as attempting to thwart differences from leading necessarily to conflict as well as not making conflict the ground for the dismissal of diversity. In other words, he too sees Follett as trying to do away with the necessary connection between difference and antagonism that often seems to be characteristic of the popular approach to the subject of difference.

> [w]e shall never succeed if we conceive the single situation as produced by coincidence of interests; this only twists and distorts the facts and that way lies failure – in the long run. The single situation is produced by the union of interests. (1924, 188)

Integrating interests precisely achieves this sort of union. The clearest definition of "integration" that Follett gives us runs thus, "The heart of the truth about integration is the connection between the relating of two activities, their interactive influence, and the values thereby created." (1924, 53) In the discussion in the next few pages, different aspects of this definition will become clearer.

Integration is, first and foremost, a purposive action that is evolved in relation and acknowledges and requires agency (in some form or other) on both sides of the relation. "Action" signifies doing. And, doing includes a wide array of things – evaluating, selecting, choosing, and even choosing to do something or choosing to enter a relation are instances of doing. As purposive action, integration happens in light of specific interests, goals, and values. In that case, the possibility of success is heavily impacted by these elements.

It is worth noting some examples that Follett provides of integration-in-action. Although the examples are simple and limited in scope, they reveal interesting aspects of the method. The first example is as follows:

> A Dairymen's Co-operative League almost went to pieces last year on the question of precedence in unloading cans at a creamery platform. The men who came down the hill (the creamery was on a down grade) thought they should have precedence; the men who came up the hill thought they should upload first. The thinking of both sides in the controversy was thus confined within the walls of these two possibilities, and this prevented their even trying to find a way of settling the dispute which would avoid these alternatives. The solution was obviously to change the position of the platform so that both up-hillers and down-hillers could unload at the same time. … When… it was pointed out to them, they were quite ready to accept it. (Follett 1982a, 3-4)

Another example is from Follett's own experience:

> In the Harvard Library one day, in one of the smaller rooms, someone wanted the window open, I wanted it shut. We opened the window in the next room, where no one was sitting. (1982a, 3)

As Follett rightly points out, none of these are instances of compromise as there was, truly speaking, no "curtailing of desire" (1982a, 3). The actions taken also manifest a nuanced understanding of the distinction between "conflict" and "difference." However, perhaps the first step toward integrating the apparently conflictual situations was to understand the nature of the conflict. And this is impossible without bringing all differences out into the open. "We cannot hope to integrate our differences unless we know what they are." (Follett 1982a, 7)[108] The insistence on gaining a clear picture of the differences, although simple, is a critical step. A lot of conflicts are never resolved precisely because the differences underlying them never surface clearly. In her essay "Unite and Rebel! Challenges and Strategies in Building Alliances," Chicana scholar-activist and co-founder of the Institute for Multiracial Justice, Elizabeth (Betita) Martínez acknowledges, "Silences can feed the cancer of unaddressed conflict, and this has destroyed more than one project, group, or organization. … To transform the goal of unity into a reason for denying conflict, as we sometimes do, is self-defeating." (2006, 195) I think that, in fact, an easy way for a politics of domination to gain life is to prevent differences from surfacing. Obtaining a clear picture of differences sometimes requires the breaking up of the demands of each side into simpler elements. In other cases, the whole demand must be synthesized from several fragmented claims. Both begin, however, with putting all the cards on the table.

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[108] Follett goes on to say, "The first rule, then, for obtaining integration is to put your cards on the table, face the real issue, uncover the conflict, bring the whole thing into the open." (1982a, 9)

It is important to bring differences out into the open not only to facilitate communication, but also to provoke scrutiny and critique. We normally do not pause to examine and evaluate our own desires, interests, etc., unless challenged or contradicted. In Follett's words, "Revaluation is the flower of comparison." (1982a, 9) I think that evaluation affords us with an opportunity to look at the desires closely and to scrutinize their nature, functions, motivations, the power dynamic involved, and so on. Such analysis also helps us to better understand whether they can be integrated at all. A key function of revaluation for Follett, however, is that a simultaneous revaluation of desires by both sides often changes these desires. This, in turn, can potentially impact the character of conflict and foster a stronger platform for unification. Finally, revaluation can generate new values and revise older ones. In Follett's words, "While we think we are coolly comparing and judicially weighing, we are at the same time doing something; that doing is helping to build values for us." (1924, 172) "Integrating" and "evolving" experience can potentially generate "integrating and evolving values." (Follett 1924, 172)[109] Whatever may be the result, it is important to take into account the way in which questions about valuation are at the heart of process of integration.[110] This also sets it apart from mere coordination.

Another distinctive aspect of the examples cited is that the envisioning of something new mitigated the conflict. This meant going beyond the conflicting

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[109] In Follett's words, "… value does not appear on the mere viewing of interests: it is more than a process of inspection, introspection or retrospection. The realizing of a second value involves activities which change my attitude towards the first value. The evaluation of my interest changes as I *do* things. The evaluation of interests comes from the interbehavior of men. Values are "eventual things." (Follett 1924, 172)

[110] Follett states categorically, "ethics cannot be divorced from intelligence…." (1924, 172)

alternatives, while accommodating these at the same time.[111] Follett calls this excess or

novelty, *"plus values"* or *"plusvalents"* (1924, 75). Through the concept of "plus-values"

within any integrative process, she wants to emphasize the fact that previously conflicting

desires are not just combined in any additive or assimilative sense to generate the

functional whole. In popular usage, however, our tendency is to use "plus-value" for

designating a "plus relation" in the sense of a "one-by-one connection rather than

integration." (Follett 1924, 75) "Plus" in this sense, means "more" and the general

tendency is to attribute a greater value to this "more" relative to its parts. Follett thinks

that when the nature of the whole is characterized in this sense of "more," then it

becomes a static whole.[112] Contrary to this tendency, she uses "plus-value" to express

"the fact that integration gives an additional value, one more value, but not necessarily a

greater or super value." (Follett 1924, 75) It is precisely on this count that she refrains

from using the term 'super' to denote the new functional unity evolved as a result of

integration. In a footnote in *Creative Experience*, she writes, "I am certainly opposed to

the word super, which has been suggested in its place, for the 'something new' of

integration is not 'over' or 'more than' or 'greater than' the parts, as often erroneously

claimed for 'wholes.'" (1924, 75)

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[111] What is required for successful integration to take place is "not let one's thinking stay within the boundaries of two alternatives which are mutually exclusive." (Follett 1982a, 4)

[112] Follett writes, "those who give a super character to the whole often give it a static character." (1924, 99) She goes on to say, "these writers seem to me to need a fuller understanding of the dynamic nature of their wholes, for with some the whole seems to be a moment of rest between activities." (1924, 99)

Follett provides interesting insight into how to refrain from treating the "whole" as a static whole. She says that we need to ask, "What is the whole doing?" She urges in response, "It is not a quite Beneficence watching benignly over its busy children. It does not live vicariously *in* its 'parts' any more than it lives vicariously *for* its 'parts.' The parts are neither its progenitors nor its offspring. There is no influence of whole on parts in a vague, mystical sense, neither by a 'rationalization' of autocrats, but only through circular behavior." (Follett 1924, 101) Therefore, what we need to do while studying the whole a-making, is to study the "whole and parts in their active and *continuous* relation to each other." (Follett 1924, 102)

While clearing up the confusions surrounding "plus," Follett is still eager to preserve the terminology of "plusvalents" in order to distance her position from the other alternative of "equivalents" (1924, 75). Compromise in light of this terminology, for instance, would be a theory of equivalents because it tries to balance out or adjust between the given alternatives without trying to move beyond them. The emphasis on the "plus" is also what distinguishes integration from mere coordination. Coordination does take into account the interaction between the elements of a situation. However, it usually stops at aligning interests with each other so as to achieve unity, but does not attempt to move beyond the available alternatives and interweave them to generate the solution.[113] Consent, as an additive approach, also stops at this level. An integrative unity as a "community of interests understood as a unifying of interests (Follett 1924, 48), on the contrary, is different from these sorts of unities. It focuses not on balancing interests, but on *"interweaving"[114]* these to create something new. Thus conceived, a "unity is not a sterile conception but an active force. It is a double process – the activity which goes to make the unity and the activity which flows from the unity. There is no better example of centripetal and centrifugal force." (Follett 1998, 59) The very process of integration, therefore, has the potential to change agents and their desires. In Follett's words, "when a situation changes we have not a new variation under the old fact, but a new fact." (1924,

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[113] Using the term, "Gesammtsituation" from the Gestalt school, Follett writes, "But it must be remembered that *Gesammtsituation* cannot be comprehended by thinking of it as a matter of mere interaction. Integration is more than "mere coordination…." (1924, 113)

[114] "Interweaving" is a term that Follett likes to use in order to signify "reciprocal influence" between two related things, and to emphasize how both evolve within the relation. This term occurs frequently in *Creative Experience*.

69) Since integration is creative experience, it is a kind of "qualitative adjustment" as opposed to compromise, which is a "quantitative one." (Follett 1924, 163)[115]

In order to unify in the sense of "interweave," we must adopt a specific lens for looking at the individual elements within any given situation. When things are conceived as having fluid boundaries, and as emergent in situations within varied "interweavings," then two related entities can never be "constants" in any static sense. They must be viewed, to use a phrase from Follett, as *"interdependent variables"* (1924, 56). Follett writes, "Here the theater is not an independent but one of two interdependent variables." (1924, 56) A related element is not "variable" in the sense of being absolutely open-ended. "Variability," in this case signifies fluidity of boundaries and the possibility of adjusting the inside and the outside relative to each other. In light of the fact that any "activity is a function of itself interweaving with the activity of which it is a function" (Follett 1924, 72), it will not be unfair to say that things can only be variable "constants" and never "constants" in any absolute sense. This is in keeping with Follett's intentions when she writes,

> [t]he independent variable is independent only within a certain equation and our equations are constantly changing. … This is very important to remember in social psychology. The constant of one situation may not be, probably will not be, the constant of the next situation. (1924, 76)

This impetus can better facilitate a transition from the language of "opposed" interests to one of "incompatible" interests. I view this transition as not just being a linguistic matter, but potentially signifying two very different orientations towards a situation of conflict.

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[115] Further clarifying this, Follett writes, "By not interpenetrating, by simply lining up values and conceding some for the sake of getting the agreement necessary for action, our thinking just stays where it was. In integration all the overtones of values are utilized." (1924, 163)

At another point, she writes, "By integrating … interests you get the increment of the unifying." (Follett 1924, 46)

One signifies a willingness to engage in the very least, while the other moves the opposite

way. And, the importance of such willingness cannot be discounted in actually moving

from opposed purposes to new ones in the long run.

As differences are brought out into the open, purposes are evaluated, and agents

change, new purposes are also evolved. This is because, as Follett urges, "evaluation

often leads to *revaluation*." (1982a, 9) Integrative activity, therefore, can potentially

"disclose" (Follett 1924, 33) new purposes. To summarize her point of view,

> It now seems clear that we must look for purpose within the process itself. We
> must see experience as an interplay of forces, as the activity of relating leading
> through fresh relatings to a new activity, not from purpose to deed and deed to
> purpose with a fatal gap between, as if life moved like the jerks of mechanical
> toys with only an external wire-puller to account for the jerks, or a too mysterious
> psychic energy. … There is no gap in the process. (Follett 1924, 81)[116]

The fact of purposes being tied with activity, and evolving in the context of activity, is

used by Follett to argue that we must always attend to the relation between "preconceived

end" with "growing end" (1924, 82).[117] Purposes solidify within activity. Of course, the

activity begins with a purpose, but my interest in Follett's work at this point is the

emphasis on the potential of each step within an integrative activity to change or evolve

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[116] Follett gives the example of the worker, whose urge is inadequate conditions for normal living.
However, she points out that the goal itself changes as he conceives one method after another for the
bettering of those conditions- shorter hours, share in control, share in profits, etc. Looking at this case,
Follett observes, "… the urge is always the lack; the goal changes as we try one means after another of
meeting that lack." (1924, 81).
      She goes on to say, "Activity always does more than embody purpose, it evolves purpose."
(Follett 1924, 83) Again, "Experience is the dynamo station; here are generated will and purpose." (Follett
1924, 85)

[117] To state it otherwise, "You cannot coördinate purposes without developing purpose, it is part of the
same process." (Follett 1924, 82)

new purpose. The activity of integrating, therefore, becomes an activity of

"purposing"[118] at the same time.

Integration, as discussed so far, is a creative principle that aims to safeguard

differences from crystallizing.[119] In the chapter titled "Experience as Creating," however,

Follett provides an important clarification on the search for newness within the

integrative process. Ever so often "creative activity" or "invention" is used to indicate

"causeless spontaneity" (Follett 1924, 160). Such a characterization disregards the

specificity of response relative to its context. Follett cautions us,

> [w]e must not make the error of thinking that our search for the new means the
> abandonment of the old; that is a shallow thought to be wholly repudiated. …
> creative activity does not disregard the past; the past is of course the material with
> which it always works. (1924, 160)

While recognizing the importance of the old for the new, and the past for the present,

Follett urges that integration is always a progressive process. She substitutes

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[118] Follett uses this term in the chapter titled "Experience in the Light of Recent Psychology: Integrative Behavior" of *Creative Experience*, 89. She thinks that willing, purposing, etc. are the "*specific* relating of the interdependent variables, individual and situation, each thereby creating itself anew, relating themselves anew, and thus giving us the evolving situation." (1924, 89)

In their "Introduction To The Second Edition" of *Dynamic Administration*, Fox and Urwick cite an anecdote related to Follett's view on the discovery of purpose within an activity. They write, "She (Follett) once said that discovering a purpose in a situation could be like finding an unfamiliar plant and cultivating it without knowing what kind of flower or fruit to expect." (1982, xvi) They think that this observation on Follett's part was a product of her perception of her own experience rooted in the community center movement. Follett in fact, began activist work in the Boston area around 1900, and was a chair of a committee that sponsored clubs in local schoolhouses, working mainly with boys and young boys from relatively disadvantaged neighborhoods. Her aim was to get young people off the streets at night, provide a conducive environment for their learning, and eventually work with other organizations such as the Vocation Bureau of Boston, the Children's Welfare League of Roxbury, etc. to help them secure a better future. She is described as a key founding-figure of the Boston School Centers (Fox and Urwick 1982, xiii). Tracing the connection between her theoretical position and her life experience, Fox and Urwick write, "In the community centres the original purpose of getting young people off the streets had led to the organization of recreational clubs which had turned into education for democratic citizenship. The situation had changed and the purpose had changed along with it." (1982, xvi)

[119] Using the language of "integration," Follett rethinks that nature of "conflict." She writes, "while conflict as continued unintegrated difference is pathological, difference itself is not pathological." (1982a, 6) She adds that if differences are crystallized too long, then they tend to become pathological.

"integration" for *"progressive integration,"* as she thinks that "most integrations by the time we know them as such have been arrived at through many successive integrations." (Follett 1924, 160-1) As an activity of purposing and as the site for new acts of purposing, integration is a perpetual movement. Each integration offers a point of stability in the life of an evolving situation, yet there is nothing abiding, complete, and ultimate about this stability. [120] The networks in which an individual element is implicated are so vast that there is always the possibility of newer and better integrations. An integrated situation, therefore, can never be a "final" resolution in the sense of a finishing point – it is a potential starting-point for a new one.

One thing to note in the integrative process is the attempt to preserve the integrity of the elements while trying to interweave them. I have already noted the difference between diversity and conflict, and Follett's claim that getting rid of conflict (crystallized and pathological difference) need not amount to getting rid of diversity. We must learn to discern the exact nature of the differences, the points of interaction between them, and explore ways of interweaving them for the purposes of pointed action. However, it is important to remember that a successful integration is not just an activity of creating, but it is an activity of "co-creating" (Follett 1924, 302). As Ricardo S. Morse points out in his paper, "Prophet of Participation: Mary Parker Follett and Public Participation in Public Administration," integration as a method is concerned with unifying and not with unity.[121] Co-creating and interweaving is not possible if differences embodied by agents

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[120] Follett writes, "Only integration really stabilizes. But by stabilization I do not mean anything stationary. Nothing ever stays put. I mean only that particular conflict is settled and the next occurs on a higher level." (1982a, 6)

[121] I also incorporated analyzed aspects of this distinction in Chapter III.

are eliminated through domination, sacrifice, and other instances of asserting power-over.

No wonder, Follett uses the phrase *"progressive differings,"* (1982a, 6) hand-in-hand

with "progressive integrating." Every progressive integrating is, at the same time, a

progressive differing. Due to its emphasis on the nuanced working of integrating and

differentiating in any act of integration, the latter is a more viable alternative to the

boundary problem compared to other modes negotiating differences such as domination,

compromise, consent, and coordination.[122] In Follett's words,

> The test of the vitality of any experience is its power to unite into a living,
> generating activity its self-yielding differences. We seek a richly diversified
> experience where every difference strengthens and reinforces the other. … Each
> remains forever himself that thereby the larger activity may be enriched and in its
> refluence, reinforce him. (1924, 302)

The authority of the unity, that is, the common will arrived at through integration,

is "derived from nothing else but interweaving *individual a*ctivity." (Follett 1924, 48) It

is at the node of such interweaving that power emerges for Follett. It is due to the fact

that "integrated interest" is an interest that is "evolved by, relation," (Follett 1924, 49)

that it is able to navigate the usually troubling dichotomy between individual will and

collective will without sacrificing one to the other. Part of the concern with using the

ballot box system to generate unity, in fact, is that it prevents individual wills from

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[122] In his essay, "Toward an Evolutionary Democracy: The Philosophy of Mary Parker Follett," Matthew A. Shappiro argues that that Follett is perhaps the only thinker in modern western thought, who foresaw the need for evolutionary democracy. Shappiro's articulation of the primary features of such a democratic praxis is useful in highlighting certain crucial aspects in Follett's own thinking like the necessity of difference in keeping democracy alive, condemnation of a politics based on the sameness approach, the importance of intersubjective exchange and participation in the emergence of a consensus, and the urgent call to preserve the individual along with her voice so that she does not get lost in the attempt to arrive at a consensus or unified voice. The features that Shappiro identifies as being crucial features of a Follettian notion of democracy are very tied to the preservation of boundaries, differences, and individual integrity in the evolution of democratic power. And, of course, the discussion above points to how integration as a way of approaching differences, must be at the heart of facilitating such praxis.

playing a creative role in the birth of the common will. Visibility, selection of issues, etc. are reduced to a play of numbers.

Integration as a method is interested in evolving power, and not simply redistributing it or reversing existing structures of power (although these could sometimes be required as part of the process). As a co-active and creative process, therefore, successful integration must try to undo the powerful/powerless dichotomy at each and every step. This is due to the fact that instances of co-active power are also susceptible to becoming instances of coercive power, given the fact that the networks in which an individual emerges are so vast. In order to prevent this, critical power-analysis must be built into the structure of integration. Such analysis is partly made possible by the fact that the very act of integrating raises questions about each individual's values, interests, etc. even as these are being integrated. I think, however, that such critical power analysis must also include identifying, and constantly evaluating the power-with in a specific situation relative to any traces of power-over in it, so as to gauge how far we have progressed in terms of integration. Follett herself is somewhat ambiguous about whether we can simply engage in evolving power-with in a particular instance. However, I recognize that there is sometimes a very fine line between power-over and power-with depending on the case-at-hand, the nature of agents, the nature of the purpose, etc. Therefore, I think that a *critical and comparative power-analysis* of different aspects of the situation relative to each other is crucial for discerning how power is working in a particular case of integration and the liberatory or oppressive potential of the unities generated.

When one agent as activity-between comes into relation with another each changes in response to the other and in response to the interweaving between them. This, in turn, disrupts the language of the subject "acting on" the object and the object "acting on" the subject. I think that in addition to fracturing the subject/object divide, this also troubles the active/passive divide. Often "active" is used to signify agency or one's status as a subject, while passivity is mapped onto the lack of agency, objectification, and victimization. It is important to trouble the latter divide and complicate the concept of "empowerment" to understand the nuances of empowerment and oppression as lived in concrete material contexts. An analysis of the surrogacy relation in the next chapter will reiterate this point.

We must not lose sight of the fact that integration might not be possible in a specific instance or, more importantly, might not be the best solution in that situation. In my article, "Follett's Pragmatist Ontology of Relations: Potentials for a Feminist Perspective on Violence," I discussed situations of intimate partner violence where the nature of the conflict seems to severely restrict any possibility or hope of integration. Some of the prerequisites of integration such as openness, critique, self-valuation, and creative intelligence are almost completely absent on the part of participants in the relation. In fact, an emphasis on relations might turn out to be more disempowering for victims/survivors in such cases. Recognizing these situations, and validating the choices of survivors to disengage, I argued that integration also demands the preservation of individuality and boundaries. Indeed, methods such as domination and compromise have been critiqued due to their failure to do so. Therefore, trying to work with the relation in situations of violence would amount to compromise or consent, rather than integration.

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Follett, herself, also accommodates "disintegration" in the creative process. (1924, 178) Following up on this, she writes, "We should always see the relation between disruptive and creative forces; disruption may be a real moment in integration." (Follett 1924, 178). I had argued that despite this, the uniqueness of her framework lies in the fact that "fluid boundaries guarantees for her an outer, that is, the presence of more stuff that can always be brought into a situation in order to achieve better and better integration." (Banerjee 2008, 8) On the basis of this, I claimed that although the particular relation itself might need to be severed in the case of abusive relationships, it is other relations and integrations that help sustain the health of the individual. New connections in the form of extended family, support groups, community resources, etc., might become the source of a new life for victims/survivors. While recognizing the abundance of cases where integration is not possible, my general inclination is to go with Follett's intuition that it is possible in far greater cases than we tend to believe.[123]

Four: "Integration" and "Solidarity": Concluding Reflections

I would like to end this chapter by going back to a quote from Bernice Johnson Reagon, which I find particularly inspiring. While recognizing the importance of solidarity, Reagon writes,

> You don't do no coalition building in a womb. It's just like trying to get a baby used to taking a drink when they're in your womb. It just don't work too well. Inside the womb you generally are very soft and unshelled. You have no covering. And you have no ability to handle what happens if you start to let folks in who are not like you.

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[123] In "Constructive Conflict" Follett writes, "I want to say that definitely that I do not think integration is possible in all cases. … I do not say that there is no tragedy in life. All that I say is that if we were alive to its advantages, we could often integrate instead of compromising." (7)

In *Creative Experience*, Follett cautions us against lapsing into a superficial optimism by focusing exclusively on integration. She goes on to say, "Yet however often it is disruption which leads to fresh and more fruitful unitings…." (178)

Coalition work is not work done in your home. Coalition work has to be done in the streets. And it is some of the most dangerous work you can do. And you shouldn't look for comfort. (*Home Girls*, "Coalition Politics")

For Reagon, "coalition" has to do with "coalescing." And coalescing entails specific orientations and attitudes. It is about willing to come out of the womb or one's little barred room – images evoked by her, to designate places of comfort and safety. It demands coming out onto the streets, that is, to risk oneself, open up to the different, and stretch one's perimeter (Reagon, *Home Girls*, "Coalition Politics"). Reagon further writes of "coalition," "You have to give it all. It is not to feed you; you have to feed it. And it's a monster. It never gets enough. It always wants more." (*Home Girls*, "Coalition Politics")

Integration as discussed above, has great potential to be a fruitful principle of "solidarity" and "coalition," if these are understood as "coalescing." As I read Reagon, coalescing involves bringing diverse things together, and negotiating these differences to foster connections. While challenging boundaries and differences, however, coalescing demands their maintenance in a more fruitful and productive way. It is about "how to cross cultures and not kill yourself." (Reagon, *Home Girls*, "Coalition Politics") Through my analysis in earlier sections of this chapter, I argued that any effective tool for actualizing solidarity in a robust way must respond adequately to the boundary problem. Integration is more successful than its counterparts on these points, since it takes differences to be crucial to its own sustenance and recognizes their creative potential. Every progressive integration is also a progressive differing. Therefore, it has the potential to foster more effective coalescing which yields co-active power. Moreover, since it is a self-reflective praxis, it has less danger of becoming a static, relatively uncritical, and colonizing process such as domination or compromise. Although

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appearing to be gradual and slow, therefore, integration has revolutionary potential as a method for dealing with difference without suppressing these in the process. Barbara Smith seems to echo a similar sentiment, when she writes about "political change," "Radical political change more often happens by increments than through dramatically swift events." (*Home Girls*, "Preface to the Rutgers University Press Edition")

We must also remember that every act of integrating is also one of analyzing, critiquing, and questioning. While being a method of negotiating differences and resolving conflict, integration also marks off a specific ethical orientation. The need to be open, to listen, engage, evaluate, and critique that it places on us as agents-in-situation, can greatly complement the orientation of humility that I argued for in the previous chapter. Follett, in fact, dispels a common misconception about *"humility."* She points out that being humble is often associated with "compromise." Against this grain, she argues that this will be exposed as not being the case, if we watch compromise closely. She goes on to say that

> [t]hat kind of humility, if it existed, would not be worth much. Humility needs to be defined: it is merely never claiming any more than belongs to me in any way whatever; it rests on the ability to see clearly what does belong to me. Thus do we maintain our integrity. (Follett 1924, 157)

Real humility is tied to respecting boundaries, and requires us to see clearly see what is really ours. Compromise, on the contrary, "involves giving up part of what is yours, and the result is… action tendencies repressed, detracting from the power of the whole." (Fox and Urwick 1982, xxix) Since integration is a "qualitative adjustment," as opposed to a "quantitative one" such as compromise (Follett 1924, 163), it carries the potential for better and clearer perception, and of changing one's own thinking by subjecting it to scrutiny and letting it interweave with others not like it. In doing so, it can take us out of

our own narrow "ethnocentric way of seeing reality," (Bunch 1990, 51)[124] which can be a roadblock to learning from diversity. Integration involves risk, recognizes its own instabilities and limitations, and tries to work out better stabilities from the initial instability. It, therefore, provides additional bases for an ethical orientation of humility, along with additional resources for actualizing it.

Integration recognizes the transformative ability of agents, but yet tempers any sense of optimism with a critical power-analysis. Indeed, even if we fail to integrate a particular situation, critical and comparative power-analysis in terms of "power-with" versus "power-over" is an important tool for distinguishing between good and bad relational power. Pratt notes that the language of "power-over" actually "provides a framework for a kind of critical theory, in terms of which present social structures, institutions, and practices can be examined." (2011, 87) The comparative power-analysis, which I emphasize in addition to this distinction, also helps us to draw a subtle distinction between being an "agent" and being "empowered." Markers of agency in some of the ways discussed in this work can be somewhat present in instances of consent or compromise. For instance, consenting to ideals and standards of hegemonic feminisms could open up limited possibilities of participating in platforms of dialogue, gaining visibility, etc. However, applying a comparative power-analysis, we can gather how the slight trace of power-with that appears to be present in the situation, operates in a very large context of coercive power. This not only allows us to better analyze the situation, but gives us a better normative basis for evaluating it and calling for its transformation. If we had stopped at the level of deducing "empowerment" from markers of agency alone,

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[124] This is from Charlotte Bunch's speech, "Making Common Cause: Diversity and Coalitions," which she delivered at the National Women's Studies Association Annual Conference in Seattle, WA in 1985.

then we would have had to regard cases of consenting or compromising in the above ways as being standards for empowerment at the same time. The distinction between "agency" and "empowerment" that I have suggested, again, renders narratives of agency among the most vulnerable possible, without overlooking the vulnerability in question. It, therefore, gives us a stronger basis for formulating concerns about justice even within apparently "democratic" settings.

Integration recognizes that, although starting with specific purposes, these purposes evolve as agents interact with each other and react to new situations. Every integration tends to be the result of other integrations and can potentially become a fresh starting-point for new ones. It is, therefore, both a process and a product at the same time. Integration as an activity of purposing is a perpetual movement. Every little movement from opposing to new purposes through a process of integrating becomes an exercise and lesson in coalescing, even if it ultimately fails to yield the kind of unity initially aimed for. Indeed, it carries all the risks and possibilities that Reagon associates with an act of coalescing. Integration, rethought in this way, no longer remains just one other method for fostering solidarity, but becomes an act of *"solidarizing"* in its own right. And it is this movement that makes integration an ethical force and a critical tool for a more responsible transnational ethics across differences.

CHAPTER VI

TRANSNATIONAL SURROGACY: ISSUES AND DILEMMAS ANALYZED THROUGH A FEMINIST PRAGMATIC PHENOMENOLOGY

The issue of surrogacy has received a great deal of attention in the west since the famous Baby M case in the latter part of the 1980s. Ethicists, psychologists and legal experts have struggled with the meanings and implications of this practice, especially in its commercial form. In contemporary times, however, the phenomenon of surrogacy has assumed new dimensions as it travels across national borders in the context of globalization. As a transnational phenomenon, it is now marketed as an attractive part of "Reproductive Tourism" for the most part by various clinics and organizations located in the global south to some of the so-called "First World nations." "Commercial transnational surrogacy" is the practice of hiring a woman from a different country in exchange of payment for carrying and giving birth to a child, and then handing it over with all parental rights to the commissioning individuals.

Transnational surrogacy embodies various quandaries of globalization. Concerns about justice, ethics, legality, economic, etc. surrounding the practice push us to examine current epistemological, scientific, medical, and ethical frameworks. Furthermore, the gendered nature of the work has important implications for questions about global reproductive rights, ethics, women's experience of globalization, and international law and economic-political policy. Transnational surrogacy, therefore, becomes an ideal site for engaging ethical tools that seek to be sensitive to transnational contexts.

Until now, most of the philosophical literature on commercial surrogacy in the field of philosophy has been concentrated in ethics, and the dominant analyses have been through the lens of ethical paradigms such as reproductive liberalism versus the exploitation model. Moreover, most of this scholarship originates in, and continues to be focused on the practice of surrogacy in Western contexts. Over and above any inconsistencies that these approaches might have intrinsically, I argue that additional problems are encountered if we try to simply extend them to a transnational context. The transnational world of today with its ever-expanding markets demands new theoretical tools of analysis from ethicists and philosophers. In fact, looking at concrete lived situations within a global context such as transnational surrogacy can be very productive for western ethical discourse to critically revisit its own theoretical resources.

In this chapter, I first critique the dominant Western ethical models available to us. In Section Two, I provide an analysis of the phenomenon by engaging various resources developed in the course of this dissertation. I argue that a phenomenologically grounded and pragmatically oriented paradigm does more justice to the lived experiences of the surrogates and in arriving at a more nuanced understanding of oppression/empowerment within the relation. At the same time, it is able to identify a new and more effective starting-point of analyzing the problem itself. In Section Three, I articulate the ways in which this model succeeds in reorienting the ethics on the issue in a way that is radically transformative, but works with sensitivity to our limitations as agents-in-situation.[125]

In my use of examples, I focus on India, since it is considered to be the capital of reproductive tourism (especially surrogacy-related fertility tourism) in contemporary

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[125] Similar analysis can be found in the context of pragmatist ethics in Banerjee 2010.

times.[126] In fact, as early as 2007, Polly Dunbar had reported in *The Daily Mail* that

surrogacy in India was already a £250million-a-year business and is growing rapidly. On

another estimate published in the same year in an article, "Surrogate Mothers: Womb for

Rent" published in *Marie Claire,* Indian surrogacy was considered already to be a $445-

million-a-year business. Certain clinics based in bigger cities such as Mumbai, as well as

smaller towns such as Anand, have become hubs in reproductive tourism for couples

from North America, Europe etc. In fact, *The Daily Mail* reports Dr. Patel of the

Akanksha Clinic as saying, "[V]irtually every day… middle-class Western couples arrive

at the clinic, hoping that an impoverished local woman will carry their child."[127] Part of

this boom might be the result of the fact that the Supreme Court of India has recognized

commercial surrogacy as legal since 2002. The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare,

Government of India, has also drafted the "Assisted Reproductive Technology

(Regulation) Bill" with an aim to secure clear legal guidelines for the practice. The bill

seeks to ensure the safe and ethical use of assisted reproductive technologies. Feminists,

legal theorists, and medical practitioners alike have scrutinized the draft bill closely.

Some critics hold that the bill fails to safeguard the interests of the surrogates, donors,

and children. Critics also take it as promoting reproductive tourism in India. At present,

however, commercial surrogacy in India continues to be governed by the "National

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[126] Of course, transnational surrogacy and reproductive tourism have also traveled to other countries of the global south. In order to ensure rigor and depth of analysis, however, I choose to focus on one particular social-political context.

[127] The very title of Shekhar Bhatia's article, "Investigation: Surrogate Baby Delivered Every 48 Hours", published in the *London Evening Standard* this year, also startles us into acknowledging the huge presence of transnational surrogacy in India. Bhatia records the claim of a leading obstetrician in a Mumbai hospital who says that she delivers on average one baby to a British couple every 48 hours.

Guidelines for Accreditation, Supervision and Regulation of ART Clinics in India,"
issued by the Indian Council of Medical Research in 2005.

Most of the surrogates working in the Indian clinics are "gestational surrogates"
(a surrogate who is genetically unrelated to the baby she carries, and is implanted by
someone else's fertilized egg), and not "full surrogates" (a surrogate who has a genetic
connection with the baby).[128] In the case of transnational surrogacy, the commissioning
individual/individuals tend to be from the "First World," while the transnational
surrogates come from developing nations. Anthropologist, Kalindi Vora's fieldwork
reveals that most of the Indian surrogates are day laborers from rural communities with a
middle-school or high-school equivalent education. (2009, 9) Sociologist Amrita Pande's
fieldwork in Anand in 2006 and 2007 reveals a similar pattern. Thirty-four of Pande's
forty-two interviewees reported a family income below or around India's official poverty
line and the income from surrogacy for most of them equaled to almost five years of total
family income (Pande 2009, 150). The consumer demographic, on the other hand, tends
to be socially privileged in some way or the other in terms of class, education, race, caste,
etc. The western consumer demographic includes non-resident Indians as well.

Of course, the voices of both the surrogates and the couples buying these services
are represented in and mediated by various media sources, research studies, and often by
people connected to the industry itself. In light of this, we must not lose sight of the
problems of representation, translation, statistical analysis, and so on, in the task of
engaging this issue. I think, however, that philosophical analysis can help us to broaden
our understanding of transnational surrogacy, and transnational surrogacy, in turn,

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[128] In fact, Dr Nayna Patel of the Akanksha Clinic based in Anand, insists that the couples use their own
sperm and eggs to create the embryo. (Dunbar 2007).

provides philosophers with a unique opportunity to critically engage and sharpen our ethical tools in the process. With this spirit, I undertake the current project.

One: Limitations of Approaching Transnational Surrogacy through Some Dominant Feminist Ethical Paradigms

As mentioned earlier, most of the traditional western philosophical literature on surrogacy focuses on the ethics of the practice, and tends to embrace one side or other of a binary right or wrong answer. The dominant argument for those in favor is based on the notion of "autonomy" or "choice." People in this camp (often understood as advocating a kind of *"reproductive liberalism,"* to use Raymond's term from *Women as Wombs*) argue that the surrogate has the right to choose and make decisions about her own body and reproductive capacities. In fact, Rosalie Ber points out that even some feminists, "… oppose outlawing surrogacy, seeing that as a limitation on a woman's freedom to do as she wishes with her own body." (2000, 164)[129] Cecile Fabre summarizes the autonomy argument as saying, "… in so far as women have the right to decide whether, and how, to procreate, they have the right to do so by contract and against payment." (2006, 192).

It is not uncommon to see versions of the autonomy argument in favor of surrogacy being evoked by some (especially the medical infertility experts and the fertility clinics) to justify transnational surrogacy and promote surrogacy-related fertility tourism. Transnational surrogacy is projected as creating new opportunities and conditions for the surrogate to exercise greater autonomy and feel empowered like never

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[129] Further references on sources taking this position can be found in her article. Also, see Cecile Fabre, Chapter 8: "Surrogacy Contracts" in *Whose Body is it Anyway?: Justice and the Integrity of the Person*.

before.[130] As far as the commissioning couples are concerned, an important marketing strategy is to highlight that transnational surrogacy creates the conditions for actualizing one's right to parenthood – "we care for your emotions" is a slogan on the Akanksha Infertility Clinic Web site.

On the contrary, one of the dominant Western ethical arguments against surrogacy is the *exploitation argument* that is frequently connected to the *commodification* argument.[131] It is argued by this camp of ethicists that surrogacy instead of making the feminist project a reality by giving women control over their bodies, in fact, serves the opposite purpose. It ends up reducing women to their wombs and defining them in terms of their reproductive capacities. Damelio and Sorensen summarize this line of argument as follows, "… within the surrogacy arrangement, the 'surrogate' is treated as a machine whose service can be exchanged for money. …The contracting couple simply uses her womb and controls her life." (2008, 272) Terminology of the "machine," "control" on the surrogate's life, and emphasis on the utility-value of the "womb" are significant in summarizing the commodification argument.

When applied to a transnational context, this argument might gain in force, since transnational surrogacy is intimately connected with the consumerist language of "Reproductive Tourism." Based on this aspect of commodification, the exploitation paradigm argues that the surrogate is exploited because her labor and her body are judged on the basis of their use-value. This paradigm also highlights the fact that choice does not

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[130] Dr. Patel for example, is reported as claiming that the process profits all concerned. The surrogate gets the money, which can give her and her family a better life, while the childless couple gets the child.

[131] For more detailed analysis of some of the arguments against surrogacy, see Cecile Fabre, Chapter 8: "Surrogacy Contracts" in *Whose Body is it Anyway?: Justice and the Integrity of the Person.*

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arise in a socio-cultural vacuum. What appears to be a choice of the individual surrogates

is often the outcome of explicit or tacit coercion. In other words, "… legal surrogacy

contracts, although expanding their options numerically, seem to coerce women into

making a choice they do not prefer, yet cannot refuse because the price of refusal is too

high." (Damelio and Sorensen 2008, 274)[132] Some radical feminist thinkers such as

Andrea Dworkin, arguing along these lines, liken surrogacy to prostitution.[133]

The language of "choice," when evoked in the context of transnational surrogacy

can have limited value, since it has the potential to overwrite the hegemonic depiction of

"Third World" women in the western imaginary as immature and childlike, and situate

them as active, rational, autonomous, and morally mature agents. However, reproductive

liberalism is thin in capturing the realities of surrogacy, as well as various concerns with

justice arising in this context. One of the primary reasons for this is that "agency"

somehow becomes coextensive with the power to make an autonomous choice, which

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[132] Damelio and Sorensen say this while summarizing arguments against surrogacy on grounds such as coercion and exploitation. Elsewhere, in *Women as Wombs,* Raymond echoes a similar sentiment when she says, "… *because* some women choose to enter surrogate contracts or submit themselves to the bodily invasions of multiple IVF treatments does not validate those choices." (Raymond 1993, 101)

[133] In endnote # n56 of her paper, "Selling the Womb: Can the Feminist Critique of Surrogacy be Answered?" Katherine B. Lieber refers to the work of some thinkers advancing the exploitation argument. In this respect, she refers to Anita L. Allen's paper, "Surrogacy, Slavery, and the Ownership of Life"; Gena Corea's, "The Reproductive Brothel", the brothel model of reproduction introduced by Dworkin in *Right-Wing woman*; and Shari O'Brien's "Commercial Conception: A Breeding Ground for Surrogacy". In his paper, "The Exploitation Argument Against Commercial Surrogacy", Stephen Wilkinson also provides an in-depth analysis of the "exploitation argument" as found in the literature on this subject.

This argument too has the potential to further increase in strength when applied to surrogacy in a transnational context since it is virtually impossible to talk about transnational surrogacy without exposing the power imbalance or the asymmetry in power-relations between the "First" and the "Third" Worlds.

In this context, it must however, be mentioned that although some theorists such as Wilkinson and Rosalie Ber give versions of the exploitation argument, they are not in favor of completely banning the practice. In fact, Ber accepts in her paper "Ethical Issues in Gestational Surrogacy", that gestational surrogacy is here to stay. So, the primary concern of these theorists is reform and regulation rather than complete prohibition unlike some other thinkers who use the exploitation argument not only to describe the phenomenon of commercial surrogacy, but also to argue in favor of its prohibition. Janice G. Raymond for instance in her book, *Women as Wombs: Reproductive Technologies and the Battle over Women's Freedom*, argues for abolition rather than regulation. She writes, "Ultimately, in this book I contend that the best legal approach to reproductive technologies and contracts that violate women's bodily integrity… is abolition, not regulation." (Raymond 1993, 208)

then becomes the marker of "empowerment" on this paradigm. The implication of this conflation is that the "Third World" surrogate's experience can potentially be read as "empowerment" on grounds of choice/decisional autonomy. This is troubling, since it does not capture the problems of consent and leaves out any scope for addressing the oppressive socio-political situation (both local and global) in which the surrogate takes up and lives out her identity and sense of agency as a "surrogate." If the surrogate's status as a subject is romanticized, then theoretically it becomes difficult to capture the concrete material realities of her social world along with its various constraints such as poverty, social ostracism, lack of access to certain basic necessities as children's education (especially for the girl-child), and so on. This framework, therefore, has the danger of normalizing or naturalizing power imbalances and the exploitation of the less powerful by the more powerful players of globalization. Further, reproductive liberalism as an ethical paradigm fails to do justice to the voices of those surrogates who experience and define their work in terms of their unfortunate or negative situation – "majboori" or "compulsion" (Pande 2009, 160), rather than construing it in terms of choice.

Although the available paradigms of exploitation and coercion can better accommodate some of the justice issues and reiterate the problems with terms such as "Reproductive Tourism," an ethical approach to transnational surrogacy based purely on these concepts, seems to create new problems for itself. The language of "use" and "control" at the heart of this paradigm can end up projecting individuals purely as passive victims who are always at the mercy of superior forces external to them. This view is vitiated by the opposite problem of focusing mostly on the object-status of an individual and, therefore, denying any authenticity to their act of choosing to take up an identity.

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This language becomes particularly worrisome when used in theorizing transnational surrogacy, since it can lead to the reinforcement of stereotypes of "Third World women" as being inherently powerless and passive victims. In Chapter IV, I used Mohanty's concept of "Third World Difference" to argue against such characterizations of Third World women's identities. In light of this concern, focusing merely on the passivity and victim status of "Third World" surrogates can have negative repercussions for social justice issues, as it can tacitly play a role in strengthening certain colonialist agendas. It is important to acknowledge and preserve a space for narratives of agency even as we interrogate, critique, and try to redress their exploitation and powerlessness.

Finally, although the intention of feminists such as Dworkin might be noble, adopting her way of talking about surrogacy as "prostitution" for transnational surrogacy would be an instance of discursive ethnocentrism in light of the fact that a significant number of surrogates experience a clear moral difference between prostitution and surrogacy. They live out their identity as "surrogates" in light of this distinction. Moreover, conflating the two vocations can be especially problematic for Indian surrogates, since the culture is still largely ignorant about reproduction without sex. In this scenario, likening surrogacy to prostitution has the danger of rendering surrogates even more vulnerable, and potential victims of violence, quite contrary to the motivations of the framework.[134]

I undertook the analysis so far in order to identify basic inadequacies with extending dominant Western ethical perspectives to issues with a global dimension. None of them consider accounts of the lived experiences of surrogates to be crucial to

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[134] Pande too identifies one of the reasons for the stigmatization of surrogacy in India as being the outcome of equating surrogacy with sex work. (Pande 2009, 154-5) This suggests that thinking of surrogacy much like prostitution would do little to redress the vulnerability of surrogates in the Indian context.

philosophical analysis, and necessary for discussing the ethical import of the issue. They

also appear to fail due to flawed understandings of "identity" and

"power"/"empowerment." Each of the perspectives focuses on and, for the most part,

confines its attention to either the active or the passive dimension of human existence.

However, as I have argued before, agency and passivity often do not constitute a

dichotomy within our lived experience. We realize this further as we begin to listen to the

voices of the transnational surrogates. I think, therefore, that it is hasty to draw any

simple correlation between activity and power/empowerment on the one hand, and

between exploitation, passivity, victimization and powerlessness/disempowerment on the

other.[135]

Finally, even while differing widely in their analysis and goals[136], both accounts

seem to share a certain misunderstanding of "power." Both work under the assumption of

a powerful/powerless dichotomy, which I think is the result of using a "power-over"

scheme of analysis. Either one has power or does not have it, according to this scheme.

When individuality and empowerment are understood through the lenses of a simple

"power-over" scheme, then the best response to ending oppression is inverting the

existing power structure. But as Mohanty points out, simply inverting the existing power

structure does nothing to promote larger ethical issues of justice, since the structure of

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[135] Although a few theorists like Raymond try to resist using the language of "coercion" in talking about exploitation in order to move gradually towards drawing a distinction between being passive and being a victim, these accounts still do not go far enough in highlighting the nuances of power and powerlessness in the lives of the surrogates. Victimization, on most of these accounts, still seems to designate total powerlessness and the authenticity of choice always remains at issue. To quote Raymond in this respect, women are "… left with the hollow rhetoric of choice – in reality, no choice at all." (Raymond 1993, 103) Such claims, if applied to the context of transnational surrogacy, are in the danger of further reifying "Third World Difference," and consequently, the image of the "oppressed Third World woman".

[136] While reproductive liberalism endorses surrogacy, the exploitation paradigm questions it.

power through which oppression manifests itself remains intact. Finally, since a "power-over" scheme of conceptualizing "empowerment" does not allow for the decentering of power, our resources for talking about inclusion, collective action, building coalitions across differences, sharing of resources, and an ethics of mutual responsibility in the context of a globalized economy remains strictly limited. A thicker notion of "empowerment" is, therefore, required.

The analysis reveals that searching for a simple "yes/no" resolution to the transnational surrogacy debate is naïve (will end up overlooking the complicated nature of the issue), and virtually impossible in the present circumstances. Even if surrogacy is condemned ethically and prohibited legally on grounds of exploitation, such practices are likely to continue under cover as long as economic inequalities exist and nations open up their borders to others. What we need, therefore, is a more nuanced ethical paradigm that is suited to the needs of a complicated and messy globalized world. I will now analyze the issue by engaging some of the resources for understanding "identity," "individuality," "agency," and "power" developed in the course of this dissertation.

Two: Revisiting Transnational Surrogacy through a Feminist Pragmatic Phenomenology

A: Re-orienting the Starting-Point of Ethical Analysis

Before turning towards the consideration of transnational surrogacy through the theoretical lens developed in this work, I would like to go back to some of the key claims made so far that will help me in my analysis. I argued in the course of this work for the need to recognize the intricate workings of different borders in an individual's life. An "individual" arises only in and through a process of individuation, in the context of

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various activities and relations that constitute her situation. The emergent individual, in turn, has an ordering capacity. I sought to capture both these characteristics of individuality by defining an "individual" as an "activity-between." I used this characterization to articulate an ontology of "interactive plurality," which takes interdependencies seriously. This ontology demands that we start with relations and other aspects of an individual's situation to arrive at holistic understandings of her identity and agency. It also asks us to look at the specific meanings that embodiment takes on in particular contexts, without resorting to any universal notion of oppression based on gender, race, class, etc.

If we approach transnational surrogacy through the lens of this ontology, we at once realize that instead of making the figure of the surrogate the starting-point of analysis, the starting-point itself must be re-evaluated. The identity of the transnational surrogate only emerges in the context of the relations between the so-called First and Third Worlds, created by forces of globalization, and in the particular relationship of reproductive tourism that these forces bring into existence. If we approach the identity and lived experience of the surrogate and the First World woman buying her service in the context of and by foregrounding the relationship between them, then it would be possible to get a more holistic understanding of the phenomenon itself.[137]

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[137] In her paper, "Chasing the Blood tie: Surrogate Mothers, Adoptive Mothers and Fathers, published in *American Ethnologist* Helena Ragone writes, "A review of the literature on surrogate motherhood reveals that, until now, the primary research focus has been on the surrogate mother herself, and that there have been no ethnographic studies on surrogate mother programs and commissioning couples." (1996, 353) Ragone, from the standpoint of ethnographic studies, seems to echo a concern (although not particularly in the context of transnational surrogacy) similar to the theoretical concern I raise in this paper regarding the inadequacy of an ethical perspective on transnational surrogacy that simply begins with the surrogate instead of the complex relationship between the surrogate and the commissioning couple (especially the First World woman) made possible by the global economy.

A primary reason for the failure of the dominant approaches is an excessive reliance on an atomistic ontology, rather than one based on relations. For instance, reproductive liberalism seems to be obsessed with a rather non-relational notion of individuality, which prevents it from addressing or altering the social context in which the individual is located. The exploitation paradigm, despite being a little more advanced in this respect, in its "prohibition" form makes claims about severing the relationship as a response to the surrogacy debate, not paying attention to the actual realities of the situation that might make such an undertaking impossible at the time. Moreover, even if we say that the exploitation paradigm is better than the liberal paradigm in taking a relational approach through its focus on the external constraints on choice, its primary focus on passivity and victimization makes us wonder whether it can be rich enough to accommodate any narrative of agency and resistance of the "Third World" surrogate. A failure to complicate notions of agency and subjectivity prevents both the approaches from giving us a robust account of the geographical-political-economic situation that leads to the emergence of the surrogate with that particular identity within the global context. By providing an alternative starting-point of problematization and analysis, an ontology of interactive plurality can begin to add to the transnational surrogacy debate at this point.

While emerging as a certain kind of agent within the surrogacy relation, the surrogate's body, in turn, becomes an activity-between. International markets of eggs and sperm, coupled with strides in global travel, allows the surrogate to gestate an embryo that might have traveled long distances and across geographical, cultural, religious, caste, and other borders. Great advances in medical technologies override the obstacles of such

travel through space and time. When an Indian surrogate carries a white baby, we have to admit that, in a certain sense, racial borders are transgressed and manipulated.[138] The transnational surrogate's body functions as a peculiar site of fluidity and transgression of various borders. And indeed, her embodied existence as a transnational surrogate emerges at the confluence of the interweaving of these borders.

B: An Analysis of Available Narratives of "Agency" and "Power-with" in Light of a Revised Starting-Point

A feminist pragmatic phenomenological lens expands "agency" to include things such as world-making, opening up of future possibilities, capacity to order, etc. It also exposes problematic conflations that we often resort to, as between "agency" and "autonomy," and "agency" and "empowerment." An act of choice must be attributed a certain degree of authenticity by virtue of the fact that we actively transform the situation and make it look a certain way through that choice. Yet, we cannot make a claim to empowerment simply on the grounds of exercising choice. A close look at our experiences as relational individuals exposes a rather complex phenomenology of empowerment and disempowerment arising within and only by virtue of these relations. In the evaluation or analysis of any experience and in determining its ethical import, we cannot leave this subtlety out of our accounts. Furthermore, one's experience of agency can turn out to be parasitic on the domination and suppression (modes of exerting power-over) of others. The "power-over" versus "power-with" distinction, and the comparative power-analysis emphasized, serve as additional tools for analyzing and interrogating these questions.

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[138] I do not, however, want to claim that such manipulation is innocent. This will be clarified further as the chapter develops.

I will now approach the transnational surrogate's identity and agency, as well as that of the "First World" woman buying her service, by starting with the surrogacy relation and by deploying the analytical-evaluative tools introduced. One of the things that instantly stand out is the asymmetry in economic resources between the two. The interesting point to note, however, is that often the commissioning couples are middle-class couples in their own country and come to India for assisted reproductive technologies because they cannot afford similar services and/or are under pressure due to legal, social, and other constraints back home. Dunbar quotes Dr. Patel as saying, "They are just ordinary, middle-class couples who feel they have run out of options in their own country." (2007) The *Marie Claire* article estimates the costs of surrogacy (including all medical expenses and fees for the surrogate) to be $12,000 in India compared to as high as $70,000 in the United States (Haworth 2007, 1)[139] We now start to see that the power of the commissioning woman as a "First World" woman is actualized only by virtue of the relationship with the transnational surrogate. In the context of this relationship, she gains the power to exercise real "consumer choice," a term evoked by Helena Ragone.[140] The power that such a consumer choice guarantees becomes evident when we look at examples of "special requests" that are made available to foreign couples at Dr. Rama's Institute for Fertility in Hyderabad. The clinic proudly proclaims that,

> [t]he microscopes are from Japan, the incubators for the fertilized egg cells from Germany, the artificial culture medium from Denmark, the Petri dishes and test

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[139] Some of the other articles listed are helpful sources for calculating the cost-effectiveness of the service in the "Third World" versus the "First World" from the perspective of the commissioning individuals, as well as for calculating how the payment for surrogacy compares to the pay from other occupations available to at least a huge section of the surrogates.

[140] She uses it in her article titled, "Of Likeness and Difference: How Race Is Being Transfigured by Gestational Surrogacy".

tubes from the United States and the pipettes and needles from Australia. Only the surrogate mothers come from India. (Schulz 2008, 2)

This quote is significant in highlighting the irony of the situation. Technology from the "First World" become available to these couples from the "First World" when they travel to the "Third World" in the context of "reproductive tourism" and by virtue of the presence of the "Third World" surrogate.[141] Therefore, any power that the "First World" woman enjoys through consumer choice and, in a sense, her emergence as the powerful "First World woman" is facilitated by the existence of the "Third World surrogate." It is, so to say, parasitic on the latter's existence. No analysis of her identity and agency are, therefore, possible without theorizing the relationship between her and the surrogate.

Surrogacy seems to restructure the surrogate's own situation and her experience of power in crucial ways. Incidentally, an important feature of the Indian context is that a significant number of surrogates come from groups that are disadvantaged in terms of class, caste, education, etc., and sometimes a combination of these. It is also true, as Purdy points out, that poor women are more often confined to low-level jobs in unsafe environments and suffer exposure to toxic chemicals and dangerous machinery. Even then, the disadvantage of poor wages persists in their lives. The Indian situation looks no different. Deepali Gaur Singh brings to our attention the fact that many of these women who become transnational surrogates, "…have spent endless years in low-paying, back-breaking, physically and economically exploitative and hazardous work conditions. Not surprising then that that for them pregnancy seemed a less exploitative option." (2008) Sofia Vohra, a surrogate for a couple from the United States, for instance, used to have a

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[141] To cite from a newspaper article, "The tiny Akanksha clinic in the Indian city of Anand is a world away from the slick, state-of-the-art fertility units found in Britain. … Yet British couples desperate for children are travelling to this unlikely location to pay Indian women to give birth to their babies. (Dunbar 2007)

job crushing glass for $25 a month. When interviewed, she does not hesitate to say, "Crushing glass for 15 hours a day is exploitation." (qtd. in Haworth 2007, 6) This reality must be acknowledged as we struggle with the ethics of the practice. Economically disadvantaged women would still keep on turning to these more, or at least, equally risky and exploitative occupations if the realities of their social location remain unchanged.

Under the circumstances, the payment for being a surrogate seems to be an important draw for the women concerned. For most of these women living under the poverty line, the payment they receive can help them build a house, or marry off their daughters, or give their children a proper education that they couldn't have afforded even by working in the other low-paying jobs available to them. Najima Vohra, working as a surrogate for a U.S. couple through the Akanksha Clinic, for example, helps her husband in his scrap-metal business but they earn not even $2 a day. They live in a one-room mud-house that erodes every year during the monsoons. According to her, the $5,500 she would earn can potentially make a significant difference in her life. (Haworth 2007, 3) Dr Anita Soni, a leading obstetrician and gynecologist working at one of Mumbai's top hospitals that delivers babies for three fertility clinics in Mumbai is quoted as saying, "For these surrogate mothers that amount of money is life-changing. … It is really big money. It is a jackpot." (qtd. in Bhatia 2009) The value of the money amounts to ten or fifteen years' worth of wages for these families. Moreover, Dr. Patel is reported as saying that the people working at her clinic help the surrogates to navigate through financial institutions and keep control over their own fee. She says, "For example, if she wants to buy a house, we'll hold her money for her until she's ready. Or if she wants to put it in an account for her children, we'll go with her to the bank to set up the account in her name."

(qtd. in Haworth 2007, 5) In fact, Niyati Rana reports in *Daily News and Analysis (India)* that Dr. Patel plans to start a gramin bank (a microfinance institution) to help surrogates with easy loans to deal with financial difficulties or set up small businesses.[142] Reports and interviews such as these seem to suggest that surrogacy helps these women to acquire resources and, consequently, play an active role in family decision-making processes as never before. It seems to carry with it an implicit promise of, and sometimes, actual autonomy, decisional freedom, and the opening up of possibilities (that might not be apparent to the eyes of an outside observer). These tend to become markers of agency, however limited, under the circumstances. Moreover, as the surrogates begin to have a voice in matters related to their families and children, the experience of their private worlds and gender roles within the family can potentially be restructured, at least to a certain extent. Of course, whether this ends up being the case cannot be determined in advance and in abstraction from the concrete instance.

The argument from gender exploitation, as a basis for denying agency, is also not as simple as it appears at first glance. Often the capacity to give birth is experienced as a burden by these women under normal circumstances due to lack of adequate infrastructure, the daily harsh manual work that they have to undertake, and so on. The burden and devaluation increases even more for those who are the mothers of daughters, given the value placed on the male-child and patriarchal notions of lineage rampant in several parts of India to this day. Under these circumstances, it is not difficult to experience maternity as a burden, especially in rural India. However, the situation looks very different when the women offer these same capacities in the context of surrogacy.

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[142] Dr. Patel is quoted as saying, "The rationale of the gramin bank is to enable surrogate mothers keep their money safely. …We have formed the Anand Surrogate Trust, and the bank will function as a part of the trust. We have enough donations now to offer loans to surrogate mothers and their families." (Rana 2008)

This capacity translates into a certain sort of power that they enjoy over even the economically privileged "First World" woman within the surrogacy relation. The women buying the surrogates' services and the surrogates themselves acknowledge this in several interviews. For example, Susan Morrison, from the U.K., who availed of the services of an Indian surrogate named Vimla, recollects her experience as follows,

> "I held Vimla's hand and whispered Thank you'. … She couldn't speak English, but she understood what she was doing for us and how much it meant. … We were just so grateful for her and to her. We still are." (qtd. in Bhatia 2009)

Pande also lists several interviews where the surrogates resist the narrative of disposability of their bodies (even when the institutional structure constantly reemphasizes this in various ways) through counter-narratives such as being the special person who could have brought this baby into the world, making claims on the fetus, etc. (2009, 162-164, 166-168) Pande points out, that for these women, this fact often translated into an experience of power. It seemed to boost their self-worth, and encouraged them to take greater care of themselves so that they could carry on this special task. I find the counter-narratives as also demonstrating the surrogate's awareness, at least at a certain level, of their capacity to make or break the world of the apparently "powerful" commissioning individuals through their actions. To a feminist mind, having imbibed lessons about gender oppression on the basis of female biology, this is extremely disorienting. While accommodating this insight, however, it is important not to overlook the need for situating narratives of agency and victimization within a culturally situated understanding of gendered embodiment. Even as transnational surrogates characterize the context in which they take up their identity as "surrogates" as being "exploitative," and their situation as being one of "majboori," a lot of them

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continue to maintain a somewhat ambiguous relationship to the actual act of surrogacy.

The body of the surrogate, by virtue of the experience of surrogacy, embodies an

ambiguity of power and powerlessness. I think that this ambiguous experience is partly

rooted in the potential that transnational surrogacy has to restructure, realign, and

manipulate various borders in the surrogate's own life.

C: Transnational Surrogacy and the Question of "Empowerment"

From the above analysis, we realize that the two parties at different ends of the

surrogacy relation existentially mediate each other's worlds in very concrete ways. Other

markers of agency such as decisional autonomy, opening up of future possibilities, etc.,

may also be present, although manifesting in very different ways at either end of the

relationship. Surrogacy also seems to satisfy some immediate and long-term needs for

both parties. The point remains, however, that although a patient hearing of the voices on

both sides exposes some traces of co-active power in the situation of transnational

surrogacy, this is not enough to read the relation as "empowerment," especially for the

"Third World" surrogate. The little amount of power-with that appears to be present

exists within a larger context of asymmetric power-relations or, in other words, a power-

over situation. Power-over, as coercive power, has been shown to manifest itself through

the different modes of domination, compromise, suppression, control, etc. Interrogating

the sites where this kind of power is manifest within the surrogacy relation, through a

critical and comparative power-analysis, will help us to discern justice concerns and

issues of empowerment/disempowerment.

While transnational surrogacy affords the possibility of manipulating various

problematic borders in an individual surrogate's life, this comes at a heavy cost. These

costs include but are not limited to trauma, alienation, and the problematic reification of various borders even as they appear to be transgressed. One of first things that come to my attention is a contradiction in the transnational surrogate's own situation. She becomes a site of transgression and manipulation of borders (national, racial, cultural, etc.) and offers immense possibilities for the expansion of global markets and industries across borders, precisely because she herself lacks the power to move. In other words, the choice of the "Third World" woman to actively take up the identity of a transnational surrogate and benefit from the limited opportunities it affords is made possible only by virtue of her being situated in a disadvantageous position in the global economy compared to the "First World" buyers. This brings us back to the point about every betweenness being a localized one, on the basis of which I had argued in Chapter III for taking the direction of passing into consideration while judging ethical import. The surrogate's movement is controlled to a much more intense degree than that of the commissioning individuals due to lack of financial resources, denial of formal employment status, international laws of immigration, etc.

Again, although there appears to be transgression of racial borders in the figure of the Indian surrogate gestating a white baby, on closer look the reality seems to be very different. Lets look at an example. Susan Morrison in her interview, for instance, states that, in a way, she wanted the surrogate mother to be attached to the babies (the twins for the couple), so that she takes care of them. But this was only because she already had the awareness, as the next quote in the interview reveals, that "…it would not have been in her (the Indian surrogate's) interest to keep the babies because she could not afford to — and in any case they were going to be white kids and it would have looked a bit funny."

(qtd. in Bhatia 2009) This remark, among other things, exposes an awareness of the poverty of the Indian surrogate that results in a severe power-differential in the relationship and allows Morrison to have a heavier hand in the deal. It also indicates an acute sense of racial difference and, in fact, some assumption on Morrison's part about the exclusive character of a particular racial group. This explains why white western couples, although ready to avail themselves of the services of the Indian surrogates for economic reasons, still might refrain from using eggs of a different racial group. The differences in class, race, etc. seem to guarantee more power-over to Susan in the relationship to begin with, in a way that might have been missing if she were to avail herself of the services of a woman in a better financial position, or of the same race, or one located in a different situation in the "First World," or all of these together. Consumerism in the form of global reproductive tourism, operating through the bodies of this specific group of women, ends up reproducing race, class, and other such hierarchical relations in sometimes new but problematic ways. As a result, such stereotypes as the "poor Third World woman of color" oppressed within her own society continues to be perpetuated within a neocolonial space.

Even within a particular racial group, other problematic borders such as caste borders are often safeguarded. A recent article reports Samit Sekhar, an assisted reproduction specialist from Hyderabad as stating, "Alongside looks, skin color and height and education, prospective couples look for egg donors of the same caste and religion." (qtd. in Rai 2010) The irony of the situation in this case is that, even while willing to avail themselves of the services of a lower-caste surrogate for financial convenience, commissioning individuals such as non-resident Indians, do not seem to

have the same attitude toward the egg. An implicit eugenics is made possible by a thriving egg donor industry, which then makes it possible to maintain clear-cut racial, caste, and other such borders in practice even as it confounds them on the surface. Gendered experience, hand-in-hand with global capitalism, creates a striking and neat division within global reproductive labor between groups that can be good "egg-makers" (white, educated, upper-caste, etc.) and groups that can be good "egg-nesters."

Compromise and control manifest themselves through even more ways. The surrogate experiences immense trauma and alienation within her body. The medical fertility industry demands her to maintain a rigid line of separation between her womb and the rest of her body, as well as between her body and her mind. For instance, the surrogate's own bodily mechanisms and needs have to be put on hold in order for the surrogacy to be successful. Pills and hormone shots are required for suppressing her own ovulatory cycle, so that her body can become surrogacy-friendly. She must consent to abstaining from sexual intercourse during the course of the pregnancy. We wonder whether this is again rooted in a fear of accidental genetic contamination. The transnational surrogate must be willing to suspend other aspects of her identity such as her identity as a wife, and her identity as a mother in order to live out her identity as a "transnational surrogate." The last one is required, since ignorance about reproduction without sexual intercourse, makes her vulnerable to social stigma and ostracism. In order to avoid these, and to be available for constant monitoring, women often lie to their relatives and extended families and stay away from their villages during the course of their pregnancies. Leaving their communities also means, among other things, leaving their own children behind for extended periods of time.

Instituting boundaries between the body and the mind, between the "biological" and the "affective" (Vora 2009, 9), also means instituting an emotionally damaging maternal-fetal conflict at every moment of her pregnancy. Medical personnel instill this attitude within the surrogate in subtle ways. Dr. Khanderia, for instance, communicates this point to the surrogate by saying,

> You have to do nothing. It's not your baby. You are just providing it a home in your womb for nine months because it doesn't have a house of its own. If some child comes to stay with you for just nine months what will you do? You will take care of it even more because it is someone else's. This is the same thing…**.**
> (Pande 2009, 166)

It is as if the surrogate must learn to unwind the normal clock of her life and center her life on some standard of maternal time that has been set by the industry. Only then, can her womb become the right sort of "house" for the fetus.[143] In the interviews, the women refer to strategies they devise in order to successfully institute and deal with this conflict. Najima Vohra, for example, tells herself that she will be ready to hand over the child and think of it as Jessica's child since it will not share her skin color. (qtd. in Haworth 2007, 4) Working with a deep sense of awareness of her value as an object – a container - she has to perpetually live in a crisis zone. The outcome is immense violence to her physical-psychological-emotional well-being.

The analysis so far reveals the larger context of power-over in which a very limited power-with seems to have a place. This is exposed when we adopt a relational frame of analysis, and pay special attention to kinds of order being initiated through the relation. Factors such as alienation, trauma, compromise, control, etc. in the surrogate's experience come to be the signifiers of a problem - one that dangerously threatens to

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[143] Vora thinks that counseling and training sessions for transnational surrogates are geared toward encouraging surrogates "to see themselves as gestation providers whose only link to the fetus is the renting of a womb imagined as an empty and otherwise unproductive space." (2009, 9)

undermine and destabilize the little power-with in the relation. The "First World" woman can still walk in with a heavy wallet to claim the surrogate's service, and to exercise her consumer choice. This again is based on the fact that the same borders do not carry the same meaning and weight for individuals positioned differently relative to it, although they act as creative and interactive forces in each other's lives. Whether they will become primarily liberating forces, or threatening and rigid limits, depends on where they are drawn, relative to what, on whose terms, and when and where someone is allowed to cross. Much more work is needed to convert this situation to one of "empowerment," understood in the sense of "power-with," that is, a situation marked by an acute awareness of the ways in which power is functioning and geared toward better and better integration.

An additional point to note is that the same capacity, and whether one experiences empowerment through it, looks very different when different relations are brought into the focus of discussion. What appears to be empowering in the context of transnational surrogacy might not be the same when the focus is shifted to another relation. For instance, the little financial benefit that the surrogates gets is neither sufficient to change their class/economic status in any real sense,[144] nor capable of addressing larger structural inequalities such as caste hierarchies on the ground.   This, again, reiterates the need for understanding entities and the shape that power takes for them in the context of relations and by making it the starting-point of analysis.

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[144] "When 29-year-old Shanti More (name changed) opted to bear someone else's baby, she was hoping to buy her own home after being compensated for it. However, the Rs 1.5 lakh she got for being the surrogate mother to a Delhi couple's child last year did little to make her dream a reality. "I will go through another surrogacy, but this time, I should get at least Rs 5 lakh, so that I can buy a tenement for my family," the homemaker from Ghatkopar told DNA." (qtd. in Janwalkar 2008)

Three: Ethical-Political Directions

The analyses till this point expose the cycles of dependencies established in the context of new relationships as reproductive tourism within a global economy. The application of a phenomenologically nuanced and pragmatically oriented lens to the issue of transnational surrogacy helps us to gain an awareness of the ways in which, not only are identities relational, but power, or the lack of it, also arises in the context of relations. It also allows us to see how it is still possible to be victims while actively making a choice or, at least, appearing to do so. This serves an important function in the transnational surrogacy debate.

Now we have a way of acknowledging the agency of the "Third World" surrogate in actively taking up her identity in the face of extremely difficult circumstances (alienation, the threat of ostracism, etc.) without reducing her to a passive being. At the same time, it is also possible to understand how she still is a victim in a sense in which the "First World" woman is not, and that it is highly problematic to characterize her situation as one of "empowerment." On the other hand, the fact that the "First World" woman's position ends up being a strong kind of power-over despite her dependence on the surrogate for birthing her child makes us realize that passivity does not necessarily signify disempowerment. Although she is still caught within the networks of neoliberal policies, her level of victimhood is not the same as that of the transnational surrogate. By bringing all these points to our attention, a feminist pragmatist phenomenology with its critical power analysis adds a level of richness to our understanding of the phenomenon.

Our heightened awareness of the importance of approaching identities, agency, and experiences of power via relations, as well as understanding our dependence on

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others for us to evolve any sort of power whatsoever, have the potential to reorient our ethical perspective to now focus on these relations. As we do so, and if we undertake to do so in the right spirit, we might be able to become more aware of the nature of the relations that we are instituting or participating in, the kind of values they bring into existence, and the interests they sustain. Attentiveness to the nature of the relation and what it is doing to the entities brought together by it, are the first steps towards trying to integrate interests.

An important ethical resource that can be derived from adopting the new framework is that we now have a concrete starting-point (the relation), which needs to be looked into and worked at to effect changes in the system. The relation is a productive starting-point, since things come to participate in the same network and share a common context by virtue of the relation between them, despite the fact that it might be experienced differently based on one's location in the network. Starting with a common point of interest definitely sounds like a logical approach, if our goal is integration and transformation of the situation in the long run.

In the context of transnational surrogacy, this appears to be a more realistic goal, particularly because it allows us to begin working from something that is there (the relation itself), and perhaps take our cue from the slight traces of power-with found in it and then use the same in creative ways so that this aspect gets perpetuated more and more. If we can come up with innovative ways for more power-with to emerge in the relationship, then there is a high probability that we would be able to decrease the power-over gradually. Working on the relation in this way means that it will get constantly eroded in the process and, thus, will eventually not be conserved in its present form.

Better and better integration starting with baby steps can create larger ripples, and has the potential to change the system, constituted among other things, by the relation in question. Simply disregarding the relation, as reproductive liberalism does, or just calling for its elimination, as some versions of the exploitation paradigm do, are not only unrealistic given the strength of neoliberal policies and expanding open markets, but might actually obstruct the creation of a more just and safe space for transnational surrogates. Contrary to these, a feminist pragmatic phenomenology is a better ethical and political resource, as it can provide us with better ways of framing the situation, analyzing it, and evaluating it. All the while, it recognizes that a philosophical analysis of the issue is incomplete without paying attention to the lived experiences of surrogacy. Finally, it tries to work through ethical implications while recognizing that situations often cannot be captured within binary yes/no or right/wrong responses and demands much more complex ethical analysis from us.

An ethical paradigm on the transnational surrogacy debate that is pragmatically oriented and phenomenologically rich has great potential to open up a space for an ethics of responsibility and humility towards the other. A relational analysis of identity and power, along with a nuanced understanding of the modes in which power manifests itself, facilitate this. Once we realize that genuine empowerment must be conceived as power-with that is only possible in relation (of course, not relations of domination, suppression or compromise but rather, integration), then we will understand that empowerment is a collective endeavor – one cannot be completely empowered when other entities participating in the same network of relations are oppressed.

An ethical consciousness, rooted in a feminist pragmatic phenomenology, is also one that is much more focused on what we can do for each other in the context of the relation that brings us together. It calls us to attend to our roles in living out our relations, the co-constituting effect that relata have on each other and, most importantly, to the fact that two things are responding to the relation between them in addition to responding to each other. All these remind us of our potential in reorganizing, restructuring, and sometimes even undoing the relations that structure us. Furthermore, I have emphasized the way in which progressive integration creates new agents and new situations. My interests and values get revaluated according to what I do or how I play my part in the relation. As we evaluate, revaluate, and begin to position ourselves differently with respect to existing relations and other aspects of our situation, we have far greater chances of gaining a critical perspective on the situation as a whole that constitutes our material-symbolic horizons. For instance, as individual human agents and institutions as agents with ordering capacities learn to look at the kinds of interests that are being served in the context of transnational surrogacy, they might be able to revaluate these, and thereby, transform the character of the relation itself.

At the same time, this ethical paradigm suffers from no illusion of reaching an ultimate utopia, in the form of an ultimate power-with situation. The networks in which an individual emerges are vast. Thus, integration and comparative power-analysis are ongoing and painstaking. None can be postponed for the future or given up. If we stop, then previous actions can be undone, and we might be pushed back again. Ongoing power-analysis, as I have suggested, involves identifying and constantly evaluating power-with in a specific situation, relative to the presence of any traces of power-over in

it. Only then, can we discern whether integration has progressed or digressed. Creative intelligence in the context of ethical deliberation must include this aspect. A strength of this paradigm lies in that there is hope for better and better integration, since we have identified a concrete thing to work with, namely, the relation. It also gives us important resources to think about how to move on, given the current realities of our social locations, and the constraints of our situations. On these grounds, an ethical orientation, which is inspired by a feminist pragmatic phenomenology, deserves serious consideration.

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