Rupturing Stereotypes: A Search for Equality

It is said, in philosophical texts, that women’s weapon is the word, because they talk, talk endlessly, chatter, overflow with sound, mouthsound: but they don’t actually speak, they have nothing to say. They always inhabit the place of silence, or at most make it echo with their singing. And neither is to their benefit, for they remain outside knowledge (Cixous (1981) 2000: 283-4)

Certain aspects that were once viewed as natural necessities have been renegotiated by the rising current of feminism and were found to be instances of oppression, simultaneously been extended. Liberation is seen no longer as the attainment of a fixed ideal but is instead a process of eliminating varied forms of oppression as long as they continue to arise.

The focus of this chapter will be on issues that feminist theorists explored and found wanting such as the domain of personal (home/woman) that hitherto has been considered to lie beyond the sphere of politics (public /man). Feminists were no longer interested in achieving an empty equality with men. They showed the inadequacy of the prevailing social and political theories in addressing problems that were unique to women and so rather than simply providing new answers to old problems, they demonstrated that the problems themselves have been conceived too narrowly and needed to be reconceptualized. Feminism challenged both existing political theories and the patriarchal conception of political philosophy itself and urged for a redressal and alternative measures to tide over the suppression imposed on the lot of women.

Most feminists who discuss the male orientation of philosophy converge on enlightenment thought and its fall out for contemporary deliberations. But as we have discussed in chapter two several writers have traced this back to the
Greeks and consequently, claim that western thought as a whole and not just enlightenment in particular contributes to female oppression. The denial of women as rational agents has since long been evidenced in philosophical writings. Aristotle believed that “the woman has (a deliberative faculty) but it is without authority” (Aristotle, Politics 1260a:13). Consequently, “the male is by nature superior and the female inferior; the one rules and the other is ruled” (Ibid. 1254 b: 14). Thinkers of the Middle Ages agreed with the Greeks that God made woman to be a helper in procreation for man because “woman’s power of reasoning is less than a man’s”(Aquinas 1973: 487). Modern philosophers, including many liberals, have held a substantially similar view. Hume, Rousseau, Kant and Hegel had doubts about women being rational agents. Hegel, for instance, believed that women’s deficiency in the “universal faculty” was such as to render women as different from men as plants were different from animals (Hegel 1967:263). This tendency had to be challenged by feminists who shared the characteristic liberal belief that individuals are entitled to political rights only in virtue of their capacity for reason.

Luce Irigaray shows that the masculine definition of the concept of truth and rationality are central to Plato’s concept of knowledge. In her analysis she carefully dissects the elements of the allegory and draws out their significance. She begins by observing that the prisoner is brought out of the cave as a child is brought out of the womb in a difficult delivery (Irigaray 1985a: 279). This statement sets up the basic interpretive elements she employs in her analysis. The feminine imagery is negative: the cave represents woman’s womb; breaking out of the womb means breaking into truth and knowledge. Masculine images,
on the contrary, are positive: throughout the allegory light and knowledge are associated with the masculine, earth and non-knowledge with the feminine. This dichotomy becomes clear in Irigaray’s statement that the earth is defined as “dark holes in which lucid season risks drowning” (Irigaray 1985a: 302). The connection between light and knowledge establishes an association that came to dominate western thought: vision is a “masculine” sense, while touch, on the other hand, is a feminine one. The certainty of knowledge is always associated with “seeing”, a masculine way of knowing from which the feminine is excluded (Keller and Gront Kowski 1983: 213).

The association of the masculinity with rationality, the feminine with irrationality in the history of western thought has been extensively documented in contemporary feminist scholarship. Okin’s *Women in Western Political thought* (1972) and Elshlain’s *Public Man, Private Woman* (1981) argue that the exclusion of women from the sphere of rationality is the cause of their exclusion from the political sphere. Since women are not rational they cannot be allowed to participate in the realm that is the highest expression of man’s rationality: politics.

Liberalism, as a product of the rationalism of Enlightenment thought, defines man as rational, autonomous, equal, and free of the bias of subjectivity. On the face of it liberalism appeared to include women in its programme but the founding fathers of liberalism, among them John Locke and Rousseau excluded women from the sphere of rationality and politics. Liberalism derives its definition of self from the Enlightenment dualism between the rational and the irrational. In its original formulation liberalism explicitly excluded women from
the sphere of rationality and politics. This exclusion was effected by building on the dualism between the public and the private, placing men in the former category and relegating women to the latter. The postmodern feminist critique argues that liberalism despite its emancipatory emphasis, is rooted in an epistemology that bars entry of women from the liberating realm of politics by defining them as irrational. They argue, furthermore, that the rational/irrational, public/private dichotomies are fundamental to liberalism’s epistemology; they cannot be “opened up”, eliminated or reversed without altering that epistemology beyond recognition. Their argument differs from that of the radical feminist, however, in that they want to displace rather than reverse these dichotomies.

Although Locke excluded women from the sphere of rationality and politics by arguing that they “cannot know and therefore must believe”, liberal feminists have attempted to alter Locke’s verdict on women. In “A Vindicatin of the Right of Woman” (1967) Mary Wollstonocraft attempts to open up the sphere of rationality in order to establish woman’s status as a “rational creature” (1967: 1950; Donovan, 1986: 9). She argues that if men and women were educated similarly all but the physical differences between them would disappear.

As Foucault has shown, this basic dualism of subject/object can be traced to the Greeks, it is most fully realized in Enlightenment thought and its offshoot, humanism. Like the rational irrational dualism, the dichotomy between subject and object is central to Enlightenment epistemology which defines knowledge in terms of absolute truths that are acquired by individual autonomous subjects. The two dualisms are related not only because the privileged element is
associated with the male, the disprivileged with the female. They are also linked
because the definition of rationality posited by the Enlightenment is dependent
on the acquisition of knowledge by an abstract subject of a distinct and separate
object.

The feminist critique of subjects and objects is wide-ranging. The first
clear statement of the implications of this dualism for the status of women is that
presented by Simone de Beauvoir in the Second Sex. In the Second Sex de
Beauvoir is attempting the solution to the problem of the exclusion of women
from the realm of the subject: bringing women into the realm of the subject. De
Beauvoir begins her analysis with the statement: Woman is always the “other”
to man’s “Absolute”. Her first point is that this fundamental distinction between
self and other is not symmetrical. The absolute human type is man; he is both
positive and neutral. Thus woman is always defined as peculiarity; she is “not
man”. Simon de Beauvoir goes on to assert that woman is compelled to assume
the status of Other in man’s world (De Beauvoir 1972: 29). For her the
fundamental condition of woman is that she is locked into an Otherness that is
central to human life.

Further, de Beauvoir asserts that women are incapable of action and are
thus condemned to passivity. What are commonly defined as the primary
‘activities of women, giving birth and sucktions (De Beauvoir 1972:94). Women’s incapacity to act and her inherent passivity are rooted in what de
Beauvoir sees to be the fundamental difference between men and women: men
are capable of transcendence while women are mired in immanence.

Owing to the weightage given to rationality feminists were forced to
recognize the indisputable physical differences between women and men. We
have seen already, however, that liberals view human beings as essentially rational agents and deny the physical basis of the capacity of reason, and if there is any it is a part of human essence. Feminists argued that since, physical structures, height, weight of an individual are irrelevant to his rational capability therefore the physical characteristics such as race and sex should also be irrelevant. Thus generating another view that male and female are identical in their nature, or to put it more accurately, there is no such thing as male and female nature: there is only human nature and that has no sex. Mary Wollstonecraft therefore campaigned consistently for educational opportunities for women, arguing that it is the lack of such opportunities which account for women’s failure to develop fully their capacity for rationality.

The existence of this philosophical tradition, coupled with the growing acceptance of liberal political theory in the 18\textsuperscript{th} and 19\textsuperscript{th} centuries, determined the focus on women’s rationality that we find in such thinkers as Mary Wollstonecraft in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century and J.S. Mill in the 19\textsuperscript{th}. In \textit{A Vindication of the Rights of Women} (1792), Mary Wollstonecraft argues for women emancipation.

\textbf{Mary Wollstonecraft} (1759-1797) was the best known of the early feminist writers in Europe. She is seen as pre-eminent among thinkers who not only articulated what women deserved, but also exposed the costs that society had paid because of its failure to give women what they deserved. Wollstonecraft was the first to articulate women’s issue clearly in terms that were universal and radical. In the atmosphere of French Revolution, Wollstonecraft, with the assistance of a circle of friends including many radical
thinkers of England wrote ‘A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (1792). Mary Wollstonecraft’s personal background, with its poverty and misfortunes made her aware of the trials and misfortunes of others. In addition, her own acquaintanceship with male radicals who were concerned to see women in a light different from that of most contemporary Englishmen helped her to build a solid foundation upon which to base her thoughts. In ‘Vindication’ she challenged all the prevailing notions about women’s nature, rationality and women’s place in society during her time.

Wollstonecraft was simply writing within the framework of her time, and responding to the thinkers around her. She was of the conviction that women are rendered weak and wretched, specially on account of a false system of education which was gathered from books written by men who were more anxious to make of women alluring, mistresses than rational wives. She devoted a book-length essay on women’s rights and specially on her education. Wollstonecraft argues, notes Carolyn in her essay on ‘Reason and Morals in the Early Feminist Movement: Mary Wollstonecraft’ (in the Philosophical Forum 5 nos. 1-2) that women had the potential for full rationality and consequently were as capable as men of complete moral responsibility (Carolyn 1973, Fall Winter: 74). The fact that women did not always realize this potentiality was due to the fact that they were deprived of education and confined to the domestic sphere:

Educated in worse than Egyptian bondage, it is unreasonable, as well as cruel, to upbraid them with faults that can scarcely be avoided, unless a degree of native vigour be supposed that falls to the lot of very few amongst mankind (Carolyn 1973:104).

Though Wollstonecraft accepts that women’s sphere is the home, she does not isolate home from public life as many others did. For her the public life
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and domestic life are not separate, but connected. The home is important to Wollstonecraft because it forms a foundation for the social life, the public life. The state, the public life enhances and serves both individuals and the family. Men have duties in the family too and women have duties to the state. She argued that poorly educated women cannot be good mothers or adequate homemakers or even adequate superiors of servants. She is very specific about the ways in which a number of women of the upper and upper middle classes fall short, through lack of adequate education and insufficient exposure. While attacking Rousseau’s notion that civilization itself is at fault, Wollstonecraft notes ways in which the general culture could be improved with attention to the lot of women:

“Strengthen the female mind by enlarging it, and there will be an end to blind obedience; but, as blind obedience is ever sought for by power, tyrants and sensualists are in the right when they endeavour to keep women in the dark, because the former only want slaves, and the latter a play thing. The sensualist, indeed, has been the most dangerous of tyrants, and women have been duped by their lovers, as princes by their ministers, whilst dreaming that they reigned over them” (Wollstonecraft 1792: 24).

Also Jane Duran notes in Eight Women Philosophers, that Wollstonecraft is acutely aware of the roles into which women are usually cast – wife, mothering, caring relation and is determined to make the case that, given the ubiquitousness of these roles, the well-educated woman with a formed mind is a better companion and parent than one who has never been allowed to learn.

Wollstonecraft recognized that the problem lies in women themselves not being aware of the difficulties that surrounded them, because their lack of education keeps them from realizing how they are being misused. She held that surely God would not have granted women the rationality that had been granted
to men unless it was intended to be used. Common sense and justice, not to mention the demands of society, require that women be allowed to pursue educations worthy of their spirit and intellect.

For Wollstonecraft equalized opportunities for education would make way for women to actualize their potentiality which would lead to diminishing and a possible disappearance of the gaps between the achievements of men and women. As Juliet Mitchell quotes Wollstonecraft in “Women and Equality”:

A wild wish has just flown from my heart to my head, and I will not stifle it, though it may excite a horse-laugh. I do earnestly wish to see the distinction of sex confounded in society, unless where love animates the behaviour (Wollstonecraft 1792: 79).

Wollstonecraft attempted an application of liberal enlightenment theories and for inclusion of women as rational and independent agents. She was of the view that the divine rights of husband in the family, like the divine rights of kings should be challenged and contested for reason was a distinguishing quality of all humans and not confined to man alone. Wollstonecraft made reason her starting point. For her rationality or reason formed the basis of human rights as it was the ability to grasp truth and therefore acquire knowledge of right and wrong that separates human beings from the non human world and the exercise of reason makes moral and political agents. This world-view was acknowledged by all progressive thinkers of the time and Mary Wollstonecraft went on to extend the basic ideas of enlightenment to women. There is, she claimed, only one moral standard based on rationality, ‘one measuring stick for both sexes’. Denying the existence of separate male and female virtues she stated that what were called ‘female virtues’ were really not virtues at all:

The most perfect education… is such an exercise of the understanding as is best calculated to strengthen the body and
form the heart. Or, in other words, to enable the individual to attain such habits of virtue as will render it independent. In fact, it is a farce to call any being virtuous whose virtues do not result from the exercise of its own reason. This was Rousseau’s opinion respecting men: I extend it to women… (Wollstonecraft 1791: 52).

Claiming that women had been conditioned over centuries by their faulty upbringing and lack of proper education, Wollstonecraft stressed the need for proper education. She advocated similar education for both boys and girls and severely criticized Rousseau for his biased views on women’s education. Wollstonecraft held that women are ‘educated in worse than Egyptian bondage’, she remarked that this type of education wraps a woman’s character and damages her entire personality, giving rise to the stereotype woman.

“Women are told from their infancy, and taught by the example of their mothers, that a little knowledge of human weakness, justly termed cunning, softness of temper, outward obedience, and a scrupulous attention to a puerile kind of propriety, will obtain for them the protection of man; and should they be beautiful, everything else is needless, for at least twenty years of their lives” (Wollstonecraft 1791: 72).

For Wollstonecraft the choice that women were left with was either to shut women up from infancy or else to educate them in such a manner as to be able to think and act for themselves. Wollstonecraft also argues for the right of woman to be educated, because she is primarily responsible for the education of the young. Before 1789 and her Vindication of the Rights of Man, she was known primarily as a writer about education of children, and she still accepts this role as a primary role for woman as distinct from man. Mary Wollstonecraft goes on to argue that educating women would lead to strengthening the marriage relationship. Her concept of marriage underlies this argument. A stable marriage, she believes, is a partnership between a husband and a wife—a marriage is a
social contract between two individuals. A woman thus needs to have equal knowledge and sense, to maintain the partnership. A stable marriage also provides for the proper education of children.

In her view, it would better to allow Rousseau’s Sophia (wife-to-be of his Emile) to ‘run wild’ than be corrupted by the kind of training that was an offer to girls, and which left them so helpless if married and subsequently widowed (Wollstonecraft 1995:117). Mary asks:

“Granting that woman ought to be beautiful, innocent and silly, to render her a more alluring and indulgent companion;—what is her understanding sacrificed for? And why is all this preparation necessary only, according to Rousseau’s own account, to make her the mistress of her husband, a very short time? For no man ever insisted more on the transient nature of love”. (Wollstonecraft 1995:169)

Mary Wollstonecraft acknowledges that women are sexual beings—but so are men. Thus female chastity and fidelity, necessary for a stable marriage, require male chastity and fidelity too. She argues that since men exercised their understandings more than women more modesty should be expected from them in comparison to women (Wollstonecraft 1995:211). Men are required, as much as women, to put duty over sexual pleasure. As one of her commentator Diana Coole notes that Wollstonecraft’s demand was that the female half of human species should be “treated first as human rather than as sexed beings.” (Coole 1993:94). While Catriona Mackenzie observes that:

“The overriding preoccupations of Wollstonecraft’s work, as well as of her life, were to articulate what it means for women to think and act as autonomous moral agents, and to envisage the kind of moral and political organization required for them to do so. Although at times she seemed to identify autonomy with reason, defining it in opposition to passion... Wollstonecraft also struggled to develop an account of women’s moral agency that would incorporate not only a
recognition of women’s capacity to reason but also of their right to experience and give expression to passion including sexual desire” (Mackenzie:181-203).

However, the goal for Wollstonecraft’s ethics is to harmonize feeling and thought which she calls reason. Reason was of primary importance to the Enlightenment philosophers, a company to which Mary Wollstonecraft belongs. In bringing together feeling and thought, rather than separating them and dividing one for woman and the other for man, Mary Wollstonecraft was also providing a critique of Rousseau, who defended personal rights but did not believe that such individual liberty was for women too. Woman, for Rousseau, was incapable of reason, and only man could be trusted to exercise thought and reason. Thus, for Rousseau, women could not be citizens, only men could.

But Mary Wollstonecraft, in her Vindication, makes her position clear. She holds that only when woman and man are equally free, and woman and man are equally dutiful in the exercise of their responsibilities to family and state, can there be true freedom. The essential reform necessary for such equality is equal and quality education for woman—an education which recognizes her duty to educate her own children, to be an equal partner with her husband in the family, and which recognizes that woman, like man, is a creature of both thought and feeling: a creature of reason.

Wollstonecraft opposed the assumption that women were simply slaves to their passions. She described the process by which parents bring up their daughters to be docile and domesticated. She maintained that if girls were encouraged from an early age to develop their minds, it would be seen that they were rational creatures and there was no reason whatsoever for them not to be given the same opportunities as boys with regard to education and training.
Women could enter the professions and have careers just the same as men. In proposing the same type of education for girls as that proposed for boys, Mary Wollstonecraft went a step further and proposed that they be educated together which was even more radical than anything proposed before. The idea of co-educational schooling was discarded by many educational thinkers of the time.

It was fashionable to contend that if women were educated and not docile creatures, they would lose any power they had over their husbands. Mary Wollstonecraft was totally opposed to this and maintained that ‘This is the very point I aim at. I do not wish women to have power over men but over themselves’. (Wollstonecraft 1792: 123). Mary Wollstonecraft favoured co-educational day schools, lessons given by informal conversational methods, with lots of physical exercise both free and organised. She had a picture of an ideal family where the children were nourished by an intelligent mother and not sent away to nurses and then to boarding schools and fathers as friends to their children rather than tyrants. Essentially family members should all be regarded as rational beings and children should be able to judge their parents like anyone else. Family relationships should therefore become educational ones. She writes:

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\text{Nature has given woman a weaker frame than man; but, the woman who strengthens her body and exercises her mind will, by managing her family and practicing virtues, becomes the friend, and not the humble dependent of her husband (Wollstonecraft 1792: ch.2)}
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Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* covered a wide range of topics relating to the condition of women. Not only did she argue for women’s equality with men in education but also within the law as well as their right to parliamentary representation. As regards coeducation Jane Roland Martin has
commented that 'this great historical development turned out to be a carrier of old inequities and the creator of new problems for women' (Martin, Roland 2001: 71-2). It became necessary to ensure that coeducation is 'girl and women friendly' it is also necessary to design education for both sexes that 'incorporates the virtues of rationality and self-governance that Rousseau attributed to men and also the virtue of patience and gentleness, zeal and affection, tenderness and care that he attributed to women' (ibid.)

It has been argued that Wollstonecraft was caught in some contradictions and tensions. Moira Gatens analyzes some of these rough areas for Wollstonecraft as follows:

In her attempt to stretch liberal principles of equality to women she neglects to note that these principles were developed and formulated with men as their object. Her attempts to stretch these principles to include women results in both practical and conceptual difficulties. These principles were developed with (implicitly) a male person in mind, who is assumed to be a head of household (a husband / father) and whose domestic need are catered for (by his wife)..... No matter how strong the reason, it cannot alter the fact that male and female embodiment... involved vastly different social and political consequences. (Gatens 1991:113)

Responding to Gatens’s critique, Jane Duran observed in ‘Eight Women Philosophers’ that because what Wollstonecraft implicitly demands for women is so close to the male role, it tends to overlook a deeper and more profound feminism that might, infact, use some of the notions tied to maternity and the “roles” of women for a purpose completely contrary to that of Rousseau. As Wollstonecraft is aiming at some greater good that is defined inherently in terms of its relationship to the social whole, she is also tied to those views that are allied to some concept of property rights, liberty for the individual, and free
thought, almost all of which (as Gatens claims) were originally developed for men.

While inheriting the liberal tradition John Stuart Mill sought to refine and revise some of its core tenets, for he claimed that they are partial and excludes women from liberation. Speaking to the English House of Commons on May 20, 1867, he pointed out “we talk of the political revolutions of the world, but we do not pay sufficient attention to the fact that there has taken place among us a silent domestic revolution….. that men and women for the first time in history are really companions”. In the past, “their lives were apart…. separate both in their amusement and in their serious occupations. The man spent his hours of leisure among men – with men along did he converse on any serious subject; the wife was either a play thing or an upper servant. All this among the educated classes is changing”. Mill saw this change as a stepping stone for progress of human civilization. As he says:

“The equal advent of both sexes to intellectual culture is important not only to women, which is assuredly a sufficient recommendation, but also to universal civilization. I am profoundly convinced that the moral and intellectual progress of the male sex runs a great risk of stopping, if not receding, as long as that of the woman remains behind, and that, not only because nothing can replace the mother for the education of the child, but also, because the influences upon man himself of the character and ideas of the companion of his life cannot be insignificant; women must either push him forward or hold him back” (Mill 1924: 140).

Thus, Mill saw women’s problem as a matter of concern for the entire humankind. He claimed women’s equal status in three areas: women’s right to vote, right to equal opportunities in education and employment. He sees women
as the subjugated sex denied access to their own potential and subjected to the unquestioned prejudices and biases of society.

Marriage was the institution that was used to deny women’s potential. Mill pointed out that women’s capacities were spent seeking happiness not in their own lives, but exclusively in favour and affection of the other sex, which is only given to them on the condition of their dependence on man. The parallel between women and slaves was used to depict the reality of nineteenth century England where in marriage the woman becomes subservient to her husband both in physical being and property. For women she had no choice, either marry and face the abuses and loss of dignity that subjugation and subservience brings about or remain single and get deprived of total educational and professional opportunities. A woman was thus, not free within marriage nor was she free to remain unmarried. Mill therefore claimed that women should be given a freedom of choice and equality should be the ordering principles of societal and personal relationships.

Mill believed that subordination of women is due to the fact that they may not be physically as strong as men. While this bodily strength became a characteristic of man, woman in opposition was self-abnegating patience, submissive, gentle and graceful. Besides, women are also partially responsible for their situation for accepting it voluntarily with questioning and become subsequently consenting parties to it. Men on their part not only expect obedience but even affection from women. This is ensured through education, training and socialization process. Women from childhood were taught to be submissive, yielding and accommodating rather than to become independent
with self-will and self-control. They were taught to live for others, their husbands and children. Selfless devotion was considered to be the best feminine trait, the glory of womanhood:

When we put together three things – first, the natural attraction between opposite sexes, secondly, the wife’s entire dependence on the husband, every privilege or pleasure she has being either his gift, or depending entirely on his will; and lastly, that the principal object of human pursuit, consideration and all objects of social ambition, can in general be sought or obtained by her only through him, it would be a miracle if the object of being attractive to men had not become the polar star of feminine education and formation of character” (Mill 1985: 241).

For Mill in denying women an equal position only deems men. He writes:

A most beneficial change, if the companionship were between equals; but being unequals it produces … a progressive deterioration among men in what had hitherto been considered the masculine excellences. Those who are so careful that women should not become men, do not see that men are becoming, what they have decided that women should be, are falling into the feebleness which they have so long cultivated in their companions. Those who are associated in their lives, tend to become assimilated in character. In the present closeness of association between the sexes, men cannot retain manliness unless women acquired it”. (Mill 1985: 301).

Mill believed that men would be debased if they exercise dominance and power over their women. For him the ideal was a compassionate marriage between a ‘strong minded man and a strong minded woman’. Like Wollstonecraft he believed that women can earn their liberation with the support of men. Both present a reasonable critique of male domination within marriage. Mill extends it further by pleading for a relationship based on mutual friendship and respect. Like Wollstonecraft he did believe that women were as rational as
men and once granted the same “eagerness for fame” will achieve the same success. Moreover, a judgement regarding capacities and talent in women can be made only after generations of women benefit form equal opportunities for education and employment. He rejected the idea that it was natural for a woman to be a mother and a wife and feels that it was the woman who should be able to decide whether to marry and manage a house or pursue a career. He contends that it was society however that has decided marriage to be ultimate aim for a woman. He writes:

Marriage being the destination appointed by society for women, the prospect they are brought up to, and the object which it intended should be sought by all of them, except those who are too little attractive to be chosen by any man as his companion; one might have supposed that everything would have been done to make this condition as eligible to them as possible, that they might have no cause to regret being denied the option of any other. Society, however, both in this, and, at first, in all other cases has preferred to attain its object by foul rather than fair means” (Mill 1985:315).

Mill argued that, the reason why men shy away from granting an equal status to woman is because they are afraid of marriage on equal terms. He further pointed out that marriage does not give the woman the dignity and equal status that she ought to get and once married she is totally under the control of her husband. She is denied by law right to her children and property. Also if a woman decides to leave her husband, she cannot claim anything including her children, as her own. Mill pleads therefore for equality of sexes before the law as crucial to ensuring a just arrangement. This, he felt would be beneficial to all. The need was felt that the law should take into account domestic oppression and personal violence considering the high incidences of such crimes. The only option was “the equality of married persons before the law, is not only the role
made in which that particular relation can be made consistent with justice to both sides, and conducive to the happiness of both, but it is the only means of rendering the daily life of mankind, in any high sense a school of moral cultivation” (Mill 1985: 280). A marriage contract based on equality of married persons before law was not only a sufficient but a necessary condition for a full and just equality between the sexes.

Mill considers equality as a genuine moral sentiment that should govern all relationships including the martial one. Such a sentiment can be instilled and nurtured within a family that has been justly constituted. Mill acknowledged the family as the real school for learning virtues of freedom and liberation yet it was here that sentiments of injustices, inequalities are taught. The boy by virtue of being a male is treated and reared as if he is superior and better thus dismissing the needs and interests of one half of humankind to bear the consequences of subordination and inhumaness. A just family would nurture feelings of sympathy in equality and love rather than subordination and command. Mill desires a transformation of the family to suit the temperament and spirit of the modern age, namely, the spirit of equality and justice and in the process bring about a moral regeneration of humankind. The relationship between a man and a woman in marriage should be based on mutual respect and mutual love, giving due regard to one another’s rights. This would make them self-reliant and self-sufficient.

Furthermore, regarding the relationship between the sexes Mill argues that men should not be given absolute power. Such an absolute power within the family and marriage only leads to brutalization of women. He denies the need
for one having the power of decision-making within the voluntary association between two persons and cities the example of commercial partnerships. In matters where quick decision are needed it would make sense to have division of powers but one that would involve changes in the system of principles the consent of both the parties would be required. The division of affairs for practical purposes would depend on the comparative qualifications of the couple. Here the man has a better advantage for he is the older of the two, the bread winner and provider for the family.

Here Mill continues to perceive the family where the man earns the family income and the woman takes care of domestic affairs. He carries conventional assumptions about woman’s role in a patriarchal family. In bearing and rearing children the women contribute more to the household and its common life. In addition to these chores if she goes out and works it may impair the discharge of these functions properly.

In *The Subjection* Mill asserts that in the absence of servants at home the women would have to do all the work that a servant would have done and at the same time be a mother and natural teacher to her children. Moreover, if the woman is well protected and enjoys an equal status within marriage she may not feel the need to labour outside her home for when she marries she chooses a profession, that of managing her home and bringing up her children.

Like a man when he chooses a profession, so, when a woman marries, it may in general be understood that she makes choice of the management of a household and the bringing up of a family, as the first call upon her exertions, during as many years of her life as may be required for the purpose; and that she renounces, not all other objects and occupations, but all which are not consistent with the requirements of this. (Mill 1985: 289).
Mill was convinced that such work does not restrict women, in particular, talented and exceptional ones from taking up a profession or a vocation provided due arrangements are made for taking care of household chores. Like Wollstonecraft he argues that the dignity of a woman is guaranteed if she has the power of earning her own living. A married woman must have full rights to enter a profession or take up a career. Women, he points out, are fully capable of becoming business partners, philosophers and politicians.

Undoubtedly Mill’s approaches of freedom and equality, was naïve to the liberal ideology. He went step ahead of Wollstonecraft in revising the relationship between the sexes. But his feminism falls inappropriate “in advocating true equality and freedom for married woman. He favours the traditional division of labour within the family where he asserts that women should have a real choice of career or marriage, he assumes that the majority of women are likely to continue to prefer marriage and that this choice is equivalent to choosing a career” (Okin 1979: 226). Kramnick also makes a similar charge that Mill has been unable to reconcile marriage and career for women. The character of a married woman’s life must still be primarily domestic, her education is a source of spiritual enrichment rather than the means by which she gains economic independence” (Kramnick 1972: 68). Furthermore, Mill never challenged the sexual division of labour which reflect’s wide inequality. Division of labour into two separate and opposite sphere is an expression of dualistic/binary mode of thinking. Simone-de-Beauvoir however acknowledges the role of binary’s hidden yet powerful and all pervasive, to dynamise women’s oppression.
The institutional care proposed by liberal ideologist (Wollstonecraft and Mill) is geared towards satisfying needs concerned with the physical well-being and educational reform. It rarely provides the vital emotional continuity in which essential moral and emotional development can take place, nor the ‘mental work’ women who face the oppression is owing to continuing entrenchment of the public/private split in our society. Where work is identified primarily with mind and the public realm while children and child-care are associated with reproduction and body and women, all located in the private sphere. Until the imbalances between men and women are made visible and recognized as a form of inequality it is impossible to think of any change in women’s situation. The mind/body split encourages us to identify women’s bodies as sexed and men’s as neutral. In other words, the public/private or mind/body split provides a mind-set which establish normatives and values of our thinking and thus reinforces women’s oppression.

**Simone-de-Beauvoir**, a French feminist philosopher went far beyond the liberal feminists. Beauvoir argued that women have historically been considered deviant, abnormal and always negative of man. She said that even Mary Wollstonecraft considered men to be the ideal toward which women should aspire. Beauvoir believed that this attitude limited women’s success by maintaining the perception that they were a deviation from the normal, and were always outsiders attempting to emulate “normality”. She believed that for feminism to move forward, this assumption must be set aside.

The publication of Beauvoir’s *The Second Sex* in 1949 brought a major turning-point in the history of twentieth century French feminist theory.
However, as Toril Moi points out, notes Dani Cavallaro in *French Feminist Theory*: when this work made its appearance, Beauvoir ‘was convinced that the advent of socialism alone would put an end to the oppression of women and consequently considered herself a socialist, not a feminist’ (Moi 1985: 91). Later in 1972 Beauvoir joined the *Mouvement de Liberation des Femmes* and claimed that ‘we must fight for the situation of women, here and now, before our dreams of socialism come true’ (Beauvoir 1984: 32).

She begins with the question: ‘What is woman?’ She denies that woman can be understood either in terms of her biological function or in terms of the idea of the eternal feminine, that is to say of woman’s essentially feminine nature. This latter conception is the traditional one, she admits. It involves seeing woman as defined by her sex, and hence defined relatively to man. This is to be contrasted with the traditional definition of man. Man is not essentially masculine, but a free or autonomous being. He is thus defined independently of his relation to woman. The result is the imbalance and inequality between man and woman.

In the introduction to the *Second Sex*, Beauvoir quotes Claude Levi Strauss’s *Les Structures elementaires de la parente*: ‘Passage from the state of Nature to the state of culture is marked by man’s ability to view biological relations as a series of contracts; alteration, opposition, and symmetry whether under definite or vague forms, constitute not so much phenomena to be explained as fundamental and immediately given data of social reality’ (Simone 1949: 17). As de-Beauvoir claims that so far we know there are two dualities or contrasts, to be noted in social reality. First is the duality of the Subject and the
Other, then there is the duality of Man and Woman—these pairs of opposites are related to each other in a relationship of dependence. Moreover in this relation man always appears as the subject, while woman always appears as Other.

In *The Second Sex* Beauvoir offers a social constructivist depiction of gender: ‘One is not born a woman’, one becomes one’ (Beauvoir 1973: 301). This perspective is based on the notion that human beings are transformed into specifically gendered entities as a result of patriarchal requirements that in particular, are categorized as deficient creatures incapable of matching the norm embodied by masculinity: humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as autonomous being (Beauvoir 2000a: 08).

Beauvoir, in her rejection of this traditional conception, expresses once again the essential feminist idea that woman has the same nature as man, and is like him a free and creative being. Each should be defined independently of the other, and being of equal worth should have equal rights. The individualist’s formally equal rights, however, are necessary but not sufficient. Beauvoir accepts the socialist critique of such rights, but her account of woman’s subjection is very far from being a socialist one. It is rather an existentialist one derived from the thought of Jean Paul Sartre. The essentially free individual, in seeking to realize his freedom, comes up against the consciousness of other human beings. He has an existence in their consciousness, and as such is an object for them, a being with a determinate character rather than a free subject. To that extent the other imposes an identity on the individual and denies his character as a free subject. As a free subject he and he alone determine what he
is. At the same time he maintains his independence of that determinate character by never identifying himself wholly with it, but always goes beyond it by seeking some future condition. There appears to be, then, an inherent antagonism between each free subject. Each sees the other as a threat to his freedom, and in order to overcome this he attempts to subordinate the other, to deny the other’s freedom, and make the other exist solely as a particular determinate being relative to him. Beauvoir’s work is the application of this idea to the understanding of woman in her relations with man.

The Other in the Second Sex, has three defining characteristics: it is a separate existence, it is hostile, and it is ‘the inessential’. Following G.W.F. Hegel’s theorization of master-slave relationship, Beauvoir emphasizes, however, that masculinity cannot convincingly assert itself as an absolute norm as long as it defines itself in relation to an Other: ‘the subject can be posed only in being opposed – he sets himself up as the essential, as opposed to the … inessential’, the object (Beauvoir 2000a: 09).

Simone claims that throughout the history of western thought from Aristotle to the contemporaries like Levinas, woman has consistently been consigned to the category of the Other (Beauvoir 1997: 15-16). ‘She is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not he with reference to her; she is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. He is the Subject, He is the Absolute – she is the Other’ (Beauvoir 2000a:16).

Because women have never overcome this defeat, it appears an unavoidable necessity beyond possibility of change. But Beauvoir denies that the
nature of woman is given. As inherently free subject woman is to define her own content.

It was only during the eighteenth century that some challenges were made against such definition of woman: Diderot, among other’s, strove to show that woman is, like man, a human being. Later John Stuart Mill came fervently to her defence’ (Beauvoir 1997: 23). However, with the intensification of French Revolution the denigration of women resumed with added ferocity: ‘Even within the working class the men endeavored to restrain women’s liberation, because they began to see the women as dangerous competitors – the more so because they were accustomed to work for lower wages (ibid.).

Even the women’s movement of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries does not appear to Beauvoir as an exercise of freedom. Women have gained only what men have been willing to grant. They have taken nothing, but have been content to receive, and hence have remained passive recipients defined by men. The reason for this lies in women’s lack of the concrete means of organizing themselves in a unit which could stand face to face with a correlative unit. They have no past, no history, no religion of their own, no solidarity. They live dispersed among males. Their solidarity is with the interests of their husbands. Here is the basic trait of woman as defined by man, according to Beauvoir. She is the dependent other in a totality of which the two components are necessary to one another. Thus Beauvoir call woman to assert her autonomy in defining herself against man. The goal is not so much to claim what man has, his rights, nor to participate with men in a common socialist liberation, but to win her existence as free subject by defining her own identity, giving herself a past and creating for herself solidarity with other women.
Adapting existentialist framework to the condition of worker, Beauvoir argues in the Second Sex that ‘patriarchal ideology presents woman as immanence, man as transcendence (Moi 1985: 92). Deprived of the rights to an independent subjectivity, woman has been insistently objectified and, more alarmingly still, led to internalize this disabling world-view and to exist in a state of bad faith. Women are therefore ‘relegated to the status of nebulous items incapable of transcending the sphere of brute matter, women are often responsible for perpetuating their objectification and victimization by patriarchy: for example, by introjecting stereotypical versions of femininity that reduce them to capricious and frivolous playthings (Dani Cavallaro 2003: 13).

Analysing women’s situation Beauvoir writes:

A free and autonomous being like all human creatures, nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the other. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence since her transcendence is to be overshadowed and forever transcended by another ego (conscience) which is essential and sovereign (Beauvoir 1997: 29).

Having identified women’s situation, de Beauvoir sets for herself a target of dealing with question in the Second Sex:

How can a human being in woman’s situation attain fulfillment? What roads are open to her? Which are blocked? How can independence be recovered in a state of dependency? What circumstances limit woman’s liberty and how can they be overcome? These are the fundamental question on which I would fain throw some light (Beauvoir 1997: 29).

This does not imply, according to Beauvoir, that unity with man is impossible. But this unity is always problematic. It requires recognition of reciprocity, a mitsein or being together. But here Beauvoir skates over the inherent difficulty in the Sartrean existentialist project for a common freedom.
Since the free subject defines himself as free over and against the other, the *mitsein* with the other requires their mutual opposition to a third. This is no true unity but a temporary alliance of some against the freedom of others. In Beauvoir’s view, man developed his freedom over and against woman by treating her as the other and subjecting her. Woman failed to develop her subjectivity, not because she literally fought and lost, but for reasons of a biological and historical nature. But an inherently free being, the existentialist argues, in responsible for its failure to develop that freedom, and hence woman is responsible for her own subjection. It is her own project to be the other for man. To become free, she must alter he project. The fundamental difference between male and female in mammalian species is that after coition the male is free to resume his individuality or separateness, while the female has new life attached to her. The female renounces her separateness for the benefit of the species. She maintains life, while the male creates.

The biological considerations are essential elements in woman’s situation. But she denies its crucial role in ‘that they establish for her a fixed and inevitable destiny. They are insufficient for setting up a hierarchy of the sexes; they fail to explain why woman is the Other; they do not condemn her to remain in this subordinate sole forever’ (Beauvoir 1997: 29).

Biology depicts that males and females are two types of individuals which are differentiated with a species for the purpose of reproduction. In higher forms of life reproduction has a dual function: maintenance of the species and the creation of new individuals. Among human beings there is a socially enforced division of the two vital components – maintenance of species and
creation of new individuals which is realized definitely in the separation of the sexes. Beauvoir argues that the mother sustains the closest relations with her offspring and the father shows less interest in them. ‘The female is wholly adapted for and subservient to maternity, while sexual initiative is the prerogative of the male’ (Beauvoir 1997: 52).

The bearing of maternity on individual life is governed by social conditions, by the number of births required of women, by the degree of hygienic care, by the existence of contraception. Woman is thus not this biological destiny, but what humanity has made of the biological female in the course of its history. But the Freudian theory involves the denial of freedom. It rejects the idea of the self-defining choice, and substitutes in its place emotional compulsions and prohibitions deriving from the girl’s attitudes to her own body in the social situation of the family. Women, as free being, can succeed in establishing her subjectivity, and hence in rejecting the project whereby she exists primarily as a sexual object for man. It is impossible to treat maternity as a task or service, which can be seen as part of socialized labour. In maternity, Beauvoir claims, essential values are involved for the woman. By this she means that maternity is woman’s physiological destiny or natural calling. It cannot be transformed into a purely social function, although it can be subject to human control and be made compatible with woman’s freedom.

The fundamental difference between male and female lies in: the male gamete ‘through which the life of the male is transcended in another, at the same instant becomes a stranger to him and separates from his body; so that the male recovers his individuality intact at the moment when he transcends it’ (Beauvoir
1997:54). The egg, on the other hand, begins to separate from the female body when, fully matured, it emerges from the follicle and falls into the oviduct; but if fertilized by a gamete from outside, it becomes attached again, through implantation, in the uterus. So, ‘First violated, the female is then alienated – she becomes, in part, another than herself. She carries the foetus inside her abdomen until it reaches a stage of development that varies according to the species’ (Beauvoir 1997:54). The specific difference between men and women is that the female has been the victim, or prey of species, destined to reproduce but not to create, to repeat but not to invent, to suffer and not to subdue. And it is because humanity values creation and invention for more than reproduction and suffering that men have been able to mastery.

Precisely, Beauvoir analyses that the key to the whole mystery of woman’s subordination lies in the fact that while man realizes himself in projects towards a different future through which he transcends his given existence and actualizes his freedom, woman is, through her biological destiny, directed towards the repetition of life. The domestic labours that fell to her lot, because they were compatible with the cares of maternity, imprisoned her in repetition and immanence. Man, on the other hand, has from the beginning of time been an inventor. He sets up goals and opens up the roads to them. He bursts out of the present towards a new future.

In respect of her traditional function as mother, woman fulfils her physiological destiny, Beauvoir says. It is her natural calling. But human society is not wholly abandoned to nature, and the reproductive function is no longer at the mercy of biological chance. It has come under the control of human beings.
Contraception together with legalized abortion would permit woman to undertake her maternity in freedom. Yet Beauvoir admits that in most cases the woman needs masculine support in accepting her responsibilities. She will gladly devote herself to her newborn child only if a man devotes himself to her. At which point Beauvoir does not tell us how the holy family is to be avoided. Maternity, however, is not a human transcendent act. The mother does not humanly create the baby, but it is made in her. As mother, woman is immanent and not free. It is then quite false to say that maternity is enough to define a woman’s life. The contemporary mother in particular is unhappy, dissatisfied and embittered. The great danger to which infants in our culture are exposed is subjection to a mother dissatisfied both sexually and socially. For maternity to be successful it must be freely assumed and sincerely wanted, and the woman must be in a position to bear the effort involved. It is desirable for the child that its mother be fulfilled in her relation to society, and it can only gain from being left less to the care of its parents and more to that of adults whose relation to it is impersonal and hence pure. In a properly organized community, then, children would be taken in charge for the most part by the community, the mother would be cared for and helped, and maternity would cease to be incompatible with careers for women.

De Beauvoir further argues that woman should be understood or the basis of her possibilities rather than on the basis of her limitations (biological factors). ‘Woman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming and it is in her becoming that she should be compared with man; that is to say her possibilities should be defined (Beauvoir 1997: 66).
Regarding psychoanalysis, Beauvoir argues that a study of psychoanalysis reveals its gender bias: ‘Freud never showed much concern with the destiny of woman; it is clear that he simply adapted his account from that of the destiny of man, with slight modification’ (Beauvoir 1997: 70, 71). Beauvoir criticizing Freud claims that in describing the sexual development of the boy, who is mother-fixated (the Oedipus complex), and dreads mutilation at the hands of his father (the castration complex), he ‘at first described the little girl’s history in a completely corresponding fashion, later calling the feminine form of the process the Electra complex; but it is clear that he defined it less in itself than upon the basis of his masculine pattern’. (Ibid. 72).

Furthermore, regarding Freud’s account of the Electra complex she writes:

The little girl has at first a mother fixation, but the boy is at no time sexually attracted to the father. This fixation of the girl represents a survival of the oral phase. Then the child identifies herself with the father; but towards the age of five she discovers the anatomical difference between the sexes, and she reacts to the absence of the penis by acquiring a castration complex – she imagines that she has been mutilated and is pained at the thought. Having then to renounce her virile pretensions, she identifies herself with their mother and seeks to reduce the father. The castration complex and the electra complex thus reinforce each other… the little girl entertains a feeling of rivalry and hostility towards her mother. Then the super-ego is built up also in her, and the incestuous tendencies are repressed; but her super-ego is not so strong, for the Electra complex is less sharply defined than the Oedipus because the first fixation was upon the mother, and since the father himself is the object of the love that he condemns his prohibitions are weaker than in the case of his son-rival. It can be seen that like her genital development the whole sexual drama is more complex for the girl than for her brothers. (Beauvoir 1997: 72).

Beauvoir addresses ‘two essential objections’ to the Freudian theory of female sexual development: (i) Freud assumes that woman feels that she is a
mutilated man. But, retorts de Beauvoir, this feeling is not experienced at all in many cases, while the lack of male sexual attributes occasions, not so much regret as indifference, or even disgust. (ii) The concept of the Electra complex is still very vague ‘because it is not supported by a basic description of the feminine libido’ (Beauvoir 1997: 73).

Beauvoir criticizes that the very language of psychoanalysis (‘drives’, ‘complexes’, ‘tendencies’, and so on) suggests that the drama of the individual unfolds within that individual. But a life is a relation to the world, and the individual defines himself by making his own choices in and through the world around him:

We must therefore turn toward the world to find answers for the questions we are connected with. In particular psychoanalysis fails to explain why woman is the Other. Freud himself admits that the prestige of the penis is explained by the sovereignty of the father, and, as we have seen, he confuses that he is ignorant regarding the origin of male supremacy. (Beauvoir 1997: 80, 81).

But since, women are not merely a mammalian organism, nor can she be seen exclusively in terms of her sexual nature: ‘woman’s awareness of herself is not defined exclusively by her sexuality: It reflects a situation that depends upon the economic organization of society; which in turn indicates what stage of technical evolution mankind has attained’ (Beauvoir 1997: 58).

The economic and social conditions are crucial to women situation, they can either favour or burden the women. The burdens of maternity, for instance, assume widely varying importance according to the customs: ‘they are crushing if the woman is obliged to undergo frequent pregnancies and if she is compelled to nurse and raise the children without assistance) but if she procreates
voluntarily and if society comes to her aid during pregnancy and is concerned with child welfare, the burden of maternity are light and can be easily offset by suitable adjustments in working conditions’ (Beauvoir 1997: 85).

Beauvoir claims that women’s oppression is steady outcome of male supremacy. She gives three reasons for male supremacy in pre-history: (1) Burden of reproduction made women heavily dependent on men for protection and food. (2) Domestic labours are merely functions, not activities; such functions traditionally and still largely carried out by women imprisoning women in the sphere of repetition and immanence, (3) Early man’s activity was often dangerous; it was connected, not with giving life but with risking life, and it was this features which gave it ‘supreme dignity’.

For Beauvoir reproduction was a burden thus she writes:

Pregnancy, childbirth and menstruation reduced their capacity for work and made them at times wholly dependent upon the men for protection and food. As there was obviously no birth control, and as nature failed to provide women with sterile periods like other mammalian females, closely spaced maternities must have absorbed most of their strength and time, so that they were incapable of providing for the children they brought into the world (Beauvoir 1997: 94).

The burden of reproduction accompanies the burden of domesticity. These two combined to imprison ‘woman’ in a realm of repetition and immanence. As Beauvoir puts it,

the domestic labours that fell to her lot because they were reconcilable with the cares of maternity imprisoned her in repetitions and immanence; they were repeated from day to day in an identical forms, which was perpetuated almost without change from century to century; they produced nothing new (Beauvoir 1997: 16).
On the other hand it was very different for the adult male, says Beauvoir. He did not work in accordance with natural instinct or biological behaviour like worker bees, but by means of acts that transcended his animal behaviour. Beauvoir develops this distinctively male activity as follows:

If blood were but a nourishing fluid, it would be valued no higher than milk, but the hunter was no butcher, for in the struggle against wild animals his life gave risks. The warrior put his life in jeopardy to elevate the prestige of the horde, the clan to which he belonged. And in this he proclaims dramatically that life is not the supreme value for man, but on the contrary that it should be made to serve ends more important than itself. For it was not in giving life but in risking life that man is raised above the animal, that is why superiority has been accorded in humanity not to the sex that brings forth but to that which kills (Beauvoir 1997: 95, 96).

Beauvoir ends her work with an account of her idea of the independent and autonomous woman. In the first place she reiterates the criticism of civil liberties as insufficient without economic freedom. Nothing less than gainful employment can guarantee her liberty. But in the second place the mere combination of a vote and job is not sufficient for woman’s emancipation, since on account of the socio-economic structure work today is not liberty. Even socialized labour is not sufficient. For the successful professional woman still has problems arising from the duality of her destiny as woman and as human being. As woman she is required to realize the ideal of femininity, and as passive object to man as active subject. She cannot renounce her sexual nature without mutilation and cannot fulfill it without conforming to the sexual values of man. Hence a further condition of woman’s liberation is the transformation of these values.

Therefore, according to Beauvoir a world in which men and women would be equal is easy to envisage. It is precisely what the Soviet Revolution
promised. Women reared and trained exactly like men to work under the same conditions and for the same rewards; marriage based on free agreement; maternity made voluntary through free contraception and abortion; state care of children, not in the sense of removing them from, but of not abandoning them to, their parents. Such a world, Beauvoir concludes, would not be an androgynous one. There would always remain certain differences between men and women. In particular woman’s eroticism and her sexual world have a special form of their own.

Beauvoir’s work is an analysis of all the difficulties that prevent woman from achieving her nature as a fully free and creative being. A major element in her analysis is the idea that woman’s feminine nature as passive object is the creation of man in his project to realize his freedom. But at the same time we find in Beauvoir’s work evidence against such a view. Beauvoir constantly emphasizes that it is woman’s biological function as mother and consequent role as child-rearer and home-minder which imposes a passivity on her, because it is an existence concerned with the continuity and renewal of life, and not with active freedom. In these respects it is not man’s project that defines woman’s passivity; at most one could say that man builds up the passive elements in woman’s existence into fixed conception of her nature and that it is this image that is imposed on her. Indeed Beauvoir acknowledges in the end that there is an opposition in woman between her sexual nature and her human nature, an opposition that is not present in man. But her paradoxical conclusion is that woman’s sexual nature can be changed. Woman can be liberated from the prison
of traditional marriage and the family home, and by becoming, like man, active in her sexual nature can fulfill herself as human and sexual being.

Feminist response in this category appears to be a logical extention of traditional ideology. They accepted the traditional conception of human nature and the characteristic liberal values of individual dignity, equality, autonomy and self-fulfilment. Along with these, they accepted the liberal ideal of creating a society which maximizes individual autonomy and in which all individuals have an equal opportunity to pursue their own interests as they perceive them. In applying this ideal to women, however, difficulties emerge. But this according to Irigaray attempt of assimilating women in male domain cannot constitute the philosophical foundation for an adequate theory of women’s liberation. Because the liberal paradigm is male-biased and to extend them to include women amount to the reinforcement of phallocentric theories.

As Kristeva notes that these feminists identified with and upheld the existing order, but did not intend to overturn the system. They wanted to join it instead of criticizing it. Women sought all the same rights and prerogatives that men had. This was the movement that called for equal rights and equal treatment. Its central tenet was that women deserved such things because really they were “just like” men. There were no truly important differences between the sexes, so they should be treated the same. These feminists argued that women “must appropriate the logical, mastering scientific, theoretical approaches” (Guberman 1996: 117). Previously, culture’s public, linear time had only been available to men. Women inhabited the household, for cooking, cleaning, birthing and sleeping. In the realm of the household nothing now is created, time moves in circle, there would be production the old is reproduced.