

WHAT IS LOVE?

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I. PHILOSOPHY AND THE SEXES

It is commonly alleged that philosophy as a systematic willing erects itself on the foreclosure of sexual difference. True, it is not in the most consistent parts of this willing that the word "woman," from Plato to Nietzsche, tends to arrive at a concept. Is this not perhaps the vocation of the word? But is the word "man," stripped of its generic freighting and returned to sexuation, any better treated? And is it necessary to conclude that sexual difference is, in effect, what philosophy un-differentiates? I do not think so. Too many signs attest to the contrary, if one is aware that the ruses of such a difference (certainly more subtle than those of Reason) adapt themselves well to what has not been put forward by either the word "woman" or the word "man." This is only the case because it is philosophically admissible to transpose to the sexes what Jean Genet declared of race. Asking what a black is, he added: "And above all, what color is it?" If it is asked what a man or a woman is, it would be the height of a legitimate philosophical prudence to add: "And above all, what sex is it?" Thus, it will be admitted that the question of sex is the primary obscurity, a difference thinkable only at the cost of a laborious determination of identity that it puts to work. Let us add that contemporary philosophy addresses itself at all times to women. It might even be suspected that it is, as discourse, partly a strategy of seduction. Besides, it is from the bias of love that philosophy touches upon the sexes, to the extent that it is to Plato that Lacan must look for what hold thought has over the love of transference.

Nevertheless, it is at this point that a serious objection arises: what has been said of the true reality of love, precisely outside of its Platonic inauguration - and before psychoanalysis unsettled the notion - has been in the order of art, and most singularly in novelistic prose. This coupling of love and the novel is essential, and it will be further remarked that women have not only excelled in this art, but provided its decisive impetus: Madame de La Fayette, Jane Austen, Virginia Woolf, Katherine Mansfield, among many others. And before all these, in an eleventh century unimaginable for western barbarians, Dame Murasaki Shikubu composed *The Story of Genji*, the greatest text in which what is sayable about love in its masculine dimension is deployed.

Let it not be alleged that this is a classical confinement of women to the

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effects of sublimated passion and the dimension of narrative. First of all, I want to show that the signifying bond between "woman" and "love" concerns humanity in its entirety, and even legitimates its concept. Following this, I obviously maintain that women can and will continue to excel in every domain, and thereby refound the field. The only problem, as for a man, is to know under what conditions, and at what cost. Finally, I consider the novel an art of redoubtable and abstract complexity, and the masterpieces of this art as one of the highest testimonies of which a subject is capable when a truth traverses and constitutes it.

From where can the coupling of the truth-procedures be observed, such as those I noted between passion and the novel? From a place where it is shown that love and art are crossed, or compossible in time. That place is philosophy. The word "love" will function here as a philosophical category, a legitimate construction as it is seen in the status of Eros in Platonism: the relation of this category to the love that is at play in psychoanalysis, for example in transference, will undoubtedly remain problematic. The latent rule is a rule of external coherence: "Make sure that your philosophical category, however specific, remains compatible with the analytic concept." I will not verify this compatibility in detail.

The relation of this category to the revelations of the art of the novel will remain indirect. Let us say that the general logic of love, as grasped in the rift between (universal) truth and (sexuated) knowledges ought to be put to the test in singular fictions. This time the rule will be subsumption: "Make sure that your category admits the great love stories like a syntax made from its semantic fields."

Finally, the relation of this category to common beliefs will be that of juxtaposition (since love, compared to art, science or politics is not necessarily the most frequent truth-procedure, but the most *proposed upon*). In this case, there is a common sense from which one cannot depart without various comic effects. The rule might be: "Make sure that your category, if paradoxical in its consequences, remains in line with socially acceptable amorous intuition."

## II. OF SEVERAL DEFINITIONS OF LOVE THAT WILL NOT BE RETAINED

Philosophy, or a philosophy, founds its place of thought on *rejections* and on *declarations*. In general, the rejection of the sophists, and the declaration that there are truths. In this case, there will be:

1. The rejection of the fusional conception of love. Love is not that which makes a One in ecstasy through a Two supposedly structurally given. This rejection is in its foundation identical to that which dismisses Being-for-death. This is because an ecstatic One can only be supposed beyond the Two as a *suppression of the multiple*. Hence the metaphor of night, the stubborn sacralizing of the encounter, the terror practiced by the world,

Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. In my categories, this is a figure of disaster, and as such related to the generic procedure of love. This disaster is not that of love itself, but is the remembrance of a philosopheme, the philosopheme of the One.

2. The rejection of the ablative conception of love. Love is not the prostration of the Same on the altar of the Other. I will maintain below that love is not even an experience of the Other. It is an experience of the world, or of the situation, under the post-evental condition that there were Two. I wish to subtract Eros from the entire dialectic of Eteros.
3. The rejection of the "superstructural" or illusory conception of love, dear to a pessimistic tradition of French moralists. I understand by this the conception that love is merely an ornamental semblance through which passes the real of sex, or that desire and sexual jealousy are the foundation of love. Lacan occasionally skirts this idea, for example, when he says that love is what fills in [*supplée*] the failure of the sexual relation. But he also says the opposite when he accords to love an ontological vocation, that of the "edge [*abord*] of being." But love, I believe, does not take the place of anything [*supplée*]. It *supplements*, which is completely different. It is only messed up under the fallacious supposition that it is a relation. But it is not. It is a *production of truth*. The truth of what? That the Two, and not only the One, are at work in the situation.

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### III. THE DISJUNCTION

I come now to the declarations.

It is a question here of an axiomatics of love. Why proceed in this way? By right of an essential conviction argued, moreover, by Plato: *love is by no means given in the immediate consciousness of the loving subject*. The relative poverty of all that philosophers have declared of love derives, I am convinced, from their starting from the angle of psychology or a theory of the passions. If love, however, implies the follies and torments of those in love, it does not thereby deliver its own identity through these experiences. On the contrary, it is this identity on which their *becoming* [*adviennent*] subjects of love depends.

Let us say that love is a process which arranges such immediate experiences, without the law which arranges them being decipherable from within these experiences. This can also be said: the experience of the loving subject, which is the matter of love, does not constitute any knowledge [*savoir*] of love. This is even a distinctive feature of the amorous procedure (in relation to science, art or politics): the thought that it is, is not the thought of its thought. Love, as an experience of thought, does not think itself [*s'impense*]. A familiarity [*connaissance*] with love certainly demands a test of strength, especially the strength of thought. But it is also even intransitive to this strength.

It is thus necessary to keep the pathos of passion, error, jealousy, sex and death at a distance. No theme requires more pure logic than love.

My first thesis is the following:

1. *There are two positions of experience.*

"Experience" taken in its most general sense, presentation as such, the situation. There are two presentative positions: the two positions are sexuated, and one is named "woman," the other "man." For the moment, the approach is strictly nominalist: there is no question here of an empirical, biological, or social distribution.

That there have been *two* positions can only be established retroactively. It is effectively love alone that authorizes us to formally pronounce the existence of two positions. Why? Because of the truly fundamental second thesis, which states:

2. *The two positions are absolutely disjunct.*

"Absolutely" must be taken literally: *nothing* in experience is the same for the positions of man and woman. Nothing. That is to say: the positions do not divide up experience, and there is no presentation affecting "woman" and "man" such that there are zones of coincidence or intersection. *Everything* is presented in such a way that no coincidence can be attested to between what affects one position and what affects the other.

We will call this state of affairs "disjunction." The sexuated positions are disjointed with regards to experience in general. The disjunction is not observable, and cannot itself be made the object of an experience or of a direct knowledge [*savoir*]. All such experiences or knowledges are themselves positioned within the disjunction and will never encounter anything that attests to the other position.

To have knowledge of this disjunction - structural knowledge - there must be a third position. This is prohibited by the third thesis:

3. *There is no third position.*

The idea of a third position engages an imaginary function: the angel. The discussion regarding the sex of angels is so important because its stakes are to *pronounce on the disjunc-*

tion. But this cannot be done from the point of experience alone, or from the situation.

What is it, then, which makes it possible for me, here, to pronounce on the disjunction without recourse to, or without fabricating, an angel? Since the situation alone is insufficient, it requires supplementation. Not by a third structural position, but by a singular event. This event initiates the amorous procedure: we will call it an *encounter*.

#### IV. THE CONDITIONS OF HUMANITY'S EXISTENCE

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to turn to the other extreme of the problem. This is the fourth thesis:

4. *There is only one humanity.*

What does "humanity" signify in a non-humanist sense? The term cannot be founded by any objective predicative feature, which would be idealist or biologicistic (and, in any case, irrelevant). By "humanity," I understand that which provides the support for generic procedures, or truth-procedures. There are four types of these procedures: science, art, politics, and - precisely - love. Humanity is thus attested to if and only if there is (emancipatory) politics, (conceptual) science, (creative) art, or love (not reduced to a mixture of sentimentality and sexuality). Humanity is what *sustains* [*soutient*] the infinite singularity of truths that inscribe themselves in these types. Humanity is the historial<sup>1</sup> body of truths.

Let us agree to call  $H(x)$  the humanity function. This abbreviation indicates that the presented term  $x$ , whatever it is, is supported by at least one generic procedure. One axiom of humanity indicates this: if a term  $x$  (let us say, with respect to the Kantian atmosphere, a noumenal  $\text{humanity} = x$ ) is active, or more precisely *activated as a Subject* in a generic procedure, then it is attested to that the humanity function *exists*, insofar as it admits this term  $x$  as an argument.

We insist on the point that the existence of humanity, the effectivity of its function, arises at a point  $x$  which is activated by a truth in process as this "local verification" [*avérer local*] that is a subject. In this sense, the terms of *any*

[*quelconques*] x are the domain, or the possibility [*virtualité*] of the humanity function. Insofar that a truth-procedure traverses the xs, the humanity function localizes them in its turn. It remains in the balance whether the term x permits the existence of the function that takes it as argument, or if it is rather the function that "humanizes" the term x. This balance is suspended by the initiatory events of truth, in which the term x is an operator of fidelity which endures the coarse duration that an encounter initiates as love. It returns to it through being localized, in which the famous solitude of lovers is a metonymy, as a proof that Humanity exists.

The term H as such (let's say: the substantive "humanity") appears as a potential [*virtual*] mixture of four types: politics (x militant), science (x scientist), art (x poet, painter, etc.), love (x, "elevated" [*relevée*] in disjunction by the Two, male and female lovers). The term H knots the four. The presentation of this knot, one notes, is at the heart of the disjunction between the positions - "man" and "woman" - in their relation to truth.

Now our fourth thesis, which affirms that there is only a single humanity, comes to signify this: all truth holds for *all* its historical body. A truth, whatever it is, is indifferent to all predicative partition of its support.

This clarifies simply how the terms x, the noumenal variables for the Humanity function, constitute an homogeneous class, susceptible to no other partition than that which induces the subjective activations initiated by an event, and thought according to a fidelity procedure.

In particular, a truth as such is subtracted from every position. A truth is *transpositional*. It is, moreover, the only thing which is, and this is why a truth will be called generic. I have attempted, in *Being and the Event*, an ontology of this adjective.

## V. LOVE AS THE TREATMENT OF A PARADOX

If the effects of thesis four are related to the three preceding theses, we can formulate precisely the problem that will occupy us: how is it possible that a truth is transpositional, or a truth for all, if there exists at least two positions, man and woman, that are radically disjunct in regard to experience in general?

One would expect that the first three theses would entail the following statement: truths are sexuuated. There would be a masculine and a feminine science, just as it was thought at one time that there was a proletarian science, and a science of the bourgeoisie. There would be a feminine art and a masculine art, a feminine political vision and a masculine political vision, a feminine love (strategically homosexual, as certain feminist orientations have rigorously affirmed) and a masculine love. It could obviously be added that, even if this is so, it is impossible to *know* it.

But this is not the case in the space of thought that I wish to establish. We hold simultaneously that the disjunction is radical, that there is no third position, and also that the occurrence [*qui advient*] of truth is generic, subtracted from every positional disjunction.

Love is exactly the *place* where this paradox is negotiated [*traité*].

Let us take the measure of this statement [*énoncé*]. It signifies above all that love is an operation articulated with a paradox. Love does not relieve [*relève*] this paradox but treats it. More precisely, it makes truth of the paradox itself.

The famous curse "the two sexes die in their own way" is in reality the non-paradoxical or apparent law of things. To stick to the situation (if one economizes the eventual supplement and therefore pure chance), the two sexes *never cease to die in their own way*. Furthermore, under the injunction of Capital, which couldn't care less for sexual difference, the social *roles* are indiscriminated; the more the disjunctive law is stripped away, without protocol or mediation, the more the sexes (practically indifferntiated) nevertheless continue to die in their own way. This "way" is all the more compelling for having become invisible, and thereby returned to the total character of the disjunction. The staging of the sexual roles, the enrollment of the terms *x* in two apparent classes which we will call *mx* and *wx*, is not the expression of the disjunction, but its cover-up, the obscure mediation administered by all sorts of distributive rites and access protocols. But nothing is better for Capital than if there are only *xs*. Thus our societies uncover-up the disjunction which again becomes invisible, and without any mediating display. Whence the apparent indiscernibility of the sexuated positions, which allows the disjunction to pass *as such*. This is a situation whereby each experiences that it murders possible humanity within itself, grasping it by means of this *x* that it is through a veracious fidelity.

Love is thus itself stripped bare in its function of resistance to the law of being. One begins to understand how, far from "naturally" governing the supposed relation of the sexes, *it is what makes the truth of their dis-junction*.

#### VI. LOVE, AS THE STAGE OF THE TWO, MAKES THE TRUTH OF THE DISJUNCTION AND GUARANTEES THE ONE OF HUMANITY

To understand this determination of love, and thus establish it as a constant transformation *in thought* - as the poet Alberto Caeiro puts it, "to love is to think" - it is necessary to return to the disjunction. To say that it is total is not to speak from a neutral observation point or third position, but to say that the two positions *cannot be counted as two*. How could such a count be made? The two are not presented as something which, in the three, would be an element of the three.

One must carefully distinguish love and the couple. The couple is that which, in love, is visible for a third party [*un tiers*]. This two is thus *calculated* on the basis of a situation where there are at least three. But the third party in question, whoever it is, does not incarnate a disjunct or third position. The two that the third party counts are thus an indifferent two, a two completely *exterior* to the Two of the disjunction. The phenomenal appearance of the couple, submitted to an exterior law of calculation, says nothing about love. The couple does not name love, but the state (even the State) of love: not the amorous presentation, but its representation. It is not *for love's sake* that this two are calculated from the point of the three. For love, *there are not three*, and its Two remains subtracted from all calculation.

If there are not three, it is necessary to modify the statement of thesis one, because it is more rigorous to say:

1 (a). *There is one position and another position.*

There is "one" and "one," who are not two, the one of each "one" being indiscernible, although totally disjointed, from the other. Specifically, no position-one includes an experience of the other, which would be an interiorization of the two.

This is the point that has always blocked phenomenological approaches to love: if love is "the consciousness of the other as other," this means that the other is identifiable *in consciousness* as the same. Otherwise, how to understand how consciousness, that is the place of identification of self as the-same-as-self, could welcome or experience the other as such?

Phenomenology then has only two options:

-the weakening of alterity. In my vocabulary, this means that it detotalizes the disjunction and in fact returns the schism man/woman to a *division* of the human, where sexuation as such disappears;

- the annihilation of identity. This is the Sartrean route: consciousness is nothingness, and it has no position by itself, being self-consciousness or non-thetic consciousness of self. But, to put this pure transparency to the test, it is well known what becomes of love for Sartre: an impotent oscillation between sadism (making the other into an in-itself) and masochism (turning oneself into an in-itself for the other). Which means that the Two are only a machination of the One.

To maintain at the same time the disjunction *and* that there is a truth, it is necessary to depart from *on the basis of love as a process*, and not from an amorous consciousness.

We can thus say that love is precisely this: the ad-vent [*l'avènement*] of the Two as such, the stage of the Two.

But wait: this stage of the Two is not a *being* of the Two, which would suppose three. This stage of the Two is a work, a process. It only exists as a track through the situation, *under the supposition that there are Two*. The Two is the hypothetical operator, the operator of an aleatory enquiry, of such a work or such a track.

This to-come [*ad-venue*] of the supposition of a Two is originally evental. The event is this perilous supplement to the situation that we call an encounter. Properly understood, the event-encounter occurs only in the form of its disappearance or eclipse. It is fixed only by a nomination, and this nomination is a declaration, the declaration of love. The name which declares is drawn from the void of the site from which the encounter draws the bit-of-being [*peu d'être*] of its supplementation.

What is the void invoked here by the declaration of love? It is the void, the unknown [*in-su*] of the disjunction. The declaration of love puts into circulation in the situation a vocable drawn from the null interval that disjoins the positions man and woman. "I love you," brings together [*accole*] two pronouns "I" and "you," that cannot be brought together [*inaccoler*] as soon as they are returned to the disjunction. The declaration nominally fixes the encounter as having for its being the void of the disjunction. The Two who amorously operate is properly the name of the disjunct apprehended in its disjunction.

Love is interminable fidelity to the first nomination. It is a material procedure which reevaluates the totality of experience, traversing the entire situation bit by bit, according to its connection or its disconnection to the nominal supposition of the Two.

There is here a *numerical schema* proper to the amorous procedure. This schema states that the Two fractures the One and tests the infinity of the situation. One, Two, infinity: such is the numericity of the amorous procedure. It structures the becoming of a generic truth. What truth? The truth of the situation *insofar as there exist two disjunct positions*. Love is nothing other than a trying sequence of investigations on the disjunction and the Two, such that in the retroactivity of the encounter it verifies that it has always been one of the laws of the situation.

From the moment that a truth of the situation occurs as disjunct, it also becomes clear that any [*toute*] truth is addressed to everyone [*tous*], and guarantees the uniqueness of the humanity function  $H(x)$  in its effects. Because here this point is reestablished that there is only *one* situation, from the moment that it is truly grasped. One situation, and not two. The situation that is

the disjunction is not a form of being, but a *law*. And truths are all without exception truths of *this* situation.

Love is this place which proceeds when the disjunction does not separate the situation in its being. The disjunction is only a law, not a substantial delimitation. This is the scientific aspect of the amorous procedure.

Love fractures the One according to the Two. And it is in virtue of this that it can be thought that, although worked by this disjunction, the situation is exactly as if there has been a One, and it is through this One-multiple that all truth is assured.

In our world, love is the guardian of the universality of the true. It elucidates possibility, *because it makes truth of the disjunction*.

But at what price?

## VII. LOVE AND DESIRE

The Two as post-evental supposition must be *marked* materially. It must have the primary referents of its name. These referents, everyone knows, are bodies insofar as they are marked by sexualization. The differential trait which bodies bear inscribes the Two in its nomination. The sexual is tied to the amorous procedure as the ad-vent [*l'avènement*] of the Two, in the double occurrence of a name of the void (the declaration of love) and a material disposition restricted to bodies as such. A name, drawn from the void of the disjunction, and a differential marking of bodies, thus compose together the amorous *operator*.

This question of the becoming [*advenue*] of bodies in love must be carefully delimited, because it engages [*obligé*] the *enforced* dis-relation [*dé-rapport*] between desire and love.

Desire is the captive of its cause, which is not the body as such and still less "the other" as a subject, but an object which the body bears - an object before which the subject, in a fantasmatic centering, comes [*advient*] into its own disappearance. Love obviously enters into this defile of desire, but love *does not have the object of desire as a cause*. Thus love, which marks on bodies, as matter, the supposition of the Two that it activates, can neither elude the object cause of desire nor can it arrange itself there any longer. This is because love treats bodies from the bias of a disjunctive nomination, whereas desire is related to bodies as the principle of the being of the divided subject.

Thus love is always a predicament, if not with regard to the sexual, then at least with regard to the object that wanders there. Love passes through desire like a camel through the eye of a needle. It must pass through it, but only insofar as the living body restitutes the material marking of the disjunction by which the declaration of love has realized the interior void.

Let us say that it is not *the same body* that love and desire treat, even though it is, exactly, "the same."

In the night of bodies love attempts to expand, to the extent of the disjunction, the always partial character of the object of desire. It attempts to cross the barrier of stubborn narcissism, by



## VIII. THE UNITY OF AMOROUS TRUTH; THE SEXUATED CONFLICT OF KNOWLEDGES

This point is very delicate. It is not only necessary to understand that love makes truth of the disjunction under the emblem of the Two, but that it makes it *in the indestructible element of the disjunction*.

The Two, not being presented, operate in the situation as a complex of a name and a corporeal marking. It seeks to evaluate the situation by laborious enquiries, understood here as enquiries regarding its accomplice that is also its mistake: desire. Sexuality, but also cohabitation, social representation, sorties, speech, work, travels, conflicts, children: all this is the materiality of the procedure, its track of truth through the situation. But these operations do not unify the partners. The Two operate *as disjunct*. There *will have been* a single truth of love in the situation, but the procedure of this unicity stirs in the disjunction by which it makes the truth.

The effects of this tension can be observed on two levels:

1. There are in the amorous procedure certain functions whose grouping redefines the positions.
2. What the future of the one truth authorizes by anticipation *in knowledge* is sexuated. Foreclosed from truth, the positions return in knowledge.

On the first point, I will return to a text (last in this book), entitled "Generic Writing" and which finds support in the work of Samuel Beckett. I establish that, for Beckett (I thus come here to what of the prose novel has the function of thinking the thought of love), the becoming of the amorous procedure requires that there be:

- a *wandering* function, of *alea*, of a perilous voyage through the situation, that supports the articulation of the Two and infinity. A function that exposes the supposition of the Two to the infinite presentation of the world;
- an *immobility* function, that protects, that withholds the primary nomination, that ensures that this nomination of the event-encounter is not engulfed by the event itself;
- an *imperative* function: continuing always, even in separation, and which holds that absence is itself a mode of continuation;
- a *story* function which, as the work proceeds, inscribes by a sort of archivage the becoming-truth of the wandering.

We can establish that the disjunction reinscribes itself in the table of functions. Because "man" will be axiomatically defined as the amorous position that couples the imperative and immobility, while "woman" is that which couples wandering and story-telling. These axioms do not hesitate to blend both coarse and refined commonplaces: "man" is he (or she) who does nothing, I mean nothing apparent for and in the name of love, because he holds that what he has valued once can continue to be valued without having to re-attest to it. "Woman" is she (or he) who makes love travel, and desires that her speech constantly reiterate and renovate itself. Or, in the lexicon of conflict: "man" is mute and violent, while "woman" gossips and complains. Empirical materials are required for the work of the enquiries of love, in order that there be truth.

My second point is more complex.

What I will first reject is that, in love, each sex can learn *about the other sex*. I do not think so. Love is an enquiry of the world from the point of view of the Two, and not an enquiry of each term of the Two about the other. There is a real of the disjunction, which is, exactly, that no subject is able to occupy at the same time and under the same relation the two positions. This impossibility lies in the place of love itself. It entails the question of love as a place of knowledge: what is it, on the basis of love, that is known?

We must carefully distinguish knowledge and truth. Love *produces* a truth of the situation just as the disjunction is a law of the situation. This truth composes, it compounds itself to infinity. It is thus never presented integrally. All knowledge *relative to this truth* thus disposes itself as an anticipation: if this never ending truth *will have taken place*, are judgments about it then not true, but veridical? Such is the general form of knowledge under the condition of a generic procedure, or a truth-procedure. For technical reasons, I call this *forçage*.<sup>2</sup> We can *force* a knowledge through a hypothesis regarding the having-taken-place of a truth that is *in process*. In the case of love, the *in-process* of truth bears upon the disjunction. Each person can force a knowledge of the sexuated disjunction on the basis of love, on the hypothesis of its having-taken-place.

But the *forçage* is *in* the situation where love is proceeding. If the truth is one, *forçage*, then knowledge is submitted to the disjunction of positions. What "man" knows and what "woman" knows about love on the basis of love remains disjunct. Further: the veridical judgments that bear upon the Two on the basis of its eventual opening cannot coincide. In particular, knowledges of sex are themselves irremediably sexuated. The two sexes do not not know

each other, but know each other veridically in a disjunct fashion.

Love is this stage where *a* truth about the sexuited positions proceeds, across a conflict of inexpressible knowledges.

This is truth from the point of the unknown. Knowledges are veridical and anticipatory, but disjunct. Formally, this disjunction is representable in the insistence of the Two. The position "man" sustains the split of the Two, this gap between [*l'entre-deux*] where the void of the disjunction fixes itself. The position "woman" holds that the Two are lost in wandering. I have had occasion to advance the following formula: man's knowledge organizes its judgments with the *nothing* of the Two, woman's knowledge with the *nothing that is* the Two. We can also say that the sexuited of knowledges of love disjoins:

1. the following veridical masculine statement: "What will have been true is that we were two and not at all one;"
2. the feminine statement, no less veridical, that holds: "What will have been true is that we were two, and otherwise we were not."

The feminine statement aims at being as such. Such is its destination in love, which is ontological. The masculine statement aims at the change in number, the painful effraction of the One through the supposition of the Two. It is essentially logical.

The conflict of knowledges in love shows that the One of a truth always exposes itself logically and ontologically. Which returns us to the third book of Aristotle's metaphysics and to the admirable recent commentary published by Vrin under the title *The Decision of Sense*. The enigma of this Aristotelian text derives from the passage between the ontological position of a science of being (insofar that it is), and the crucial position of the principle of identity as a pure logical principle. This passage, in general, is no more frequented than the one which goes from the female position to the male position. The authors of the commentary show that Aristotle passes "by force," in the ardor of an intermediary style, that of the refutation of the sophists. Between the ontological and logical positions, there is only the medium of refutation. Thus, for each position engaged in love, the *other* position only allows itself to be attained as if it were a sophistic to be refuted. Who is not familiar with the tiresome exhaustion of such refutations, which can be summed up by the deplorable syntagm, "you do not understand me"? An enervated form, we might say, of the declaration of love. Who loves well understands poorly.

I do not know if it was accidental that this commentary on Aristotle, that I am augmenting here in my own way, was written by a woman, Barbara Cassin, and by a man, Michel Narcy.

## IX. THE FEMININE POSITION AND HUMANITY

This will be the final word. But I will add a post-script, that will return to my beginning.

The existence of love makes it appear retroactively that, in the disjunction, the female position is oddly the bearer of love's relation to humanity as I conceive it: humanity, the function  $H(x)$  that makes an implicative knot with the truth-procedures, is science, art, politics and love.

It will be said that this is a trivial commonplace. It is said "woman" is that which thinks only of love, and "woman" is being-for-love.

Let us courageously cross the commonplace.

We will axiomatically pose that the female position is such that the subtraction of love affects it with inhumanity for itself. Or rather that the function  $H(x)$  is only able to have a value insofar as the amorous generic procedure exists.

This axiom signifies that, for this position, the prescription of humanity is only a value insofar as the existence of love is attested to.

Let us note in passing that this attestation does not necessarily take the form of an experience of love. One can be "seized" by the existence of a truth-procedure from an entirely other basis than experience. Once again, we must avoid all psychologism: what matters is not the consciousness of love but the fact that it administers, for the term  $x$ , the proof of its existence. A term  $x$ , the noumenal possibility [*virtualité*] of the human, whatever its empirical sex, only activates the humanity function on the condition of such a proof, and we propose that this proof is woman. Thus "woman" is she (or he) for whom the subtraction of love devalorizes  $H(x)$  in its other types, science, politics and art. *A contrario*, the existence of love deploys  $H(x)$  virtually [*virtuellement*] in all its types, and above all in the most connected or crossed. This undoubtedly explains the excellence of women in the novel - if it is admitted that it is a "feminized"  $x$  that is in question in the writing of the prose novel, which is to be explored further.

For the male position, it is not at all the same: each type of the procedure itself gives value to the function  $H(x)$ , without taking account of the existence of the others.

I have thus come to define the words "man" and "woman" from the point where love cuts into the knotting of the four types of truth-procedure. Again, in relation to the humanity-function, sexual difference is only thinkable

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by using love as a differentiating criterion.

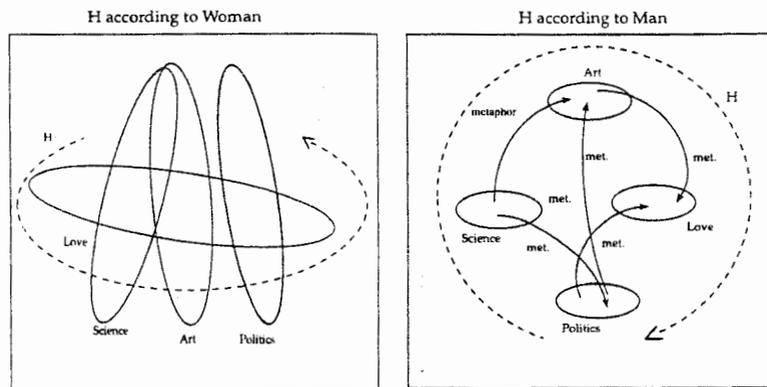
But how could it be otherwise if love, and it alone, makes the truth of the disjunction? Desire cannot found the thought of the Two, since it is the captive of the proof of being-One which the object imposes on it.

We will also say that, however it is sexuated, desire is homosexual, whereas love, even if it can be gay, is principally heterosexual. It could also be said that the passing of love in desire, whose difficult dialectic I have gestured towards above, makes heterosexual love pass in homosexual desire.

Finally, and without considering the sexes of those that a love encounter destines to a truth, it is only in the field of love that there are "woman" and "man."

But let us return to Humanity. If it is admitted that H is the virtual [*virtuelle*] composition of four types of truth, we can advance that, for the female position, the type "love" *knots the four*, and that it is only on its condition that H, humanity, *exists* as a general configuration. And that, for the male position, each type *metaphorizes the others*, this metaphor willing the immanent affirmation in each type, of humanity H.

We have the two following schemas:



These schemas show that the feminine representation of humanity is at the same time conditional and knotting, which authorizes both a more total perception *and* in that case a more abrupt right to inhumanity. However the masculine representation is at the same time symbolic and separative, which can entail not only indifference but also a greater ability to conclude.

Is it a question of a restricted conception of femininity? Does this commonplace, even if elaborated, rediscover a scheme of domination which summarily states: access to the symbolic and the universal is more immediate for man? Or that man is less the mere tributary of an encounter.

We could object that the encounter is everywhere: all generic procedures are post-evental.

But this is not essential. What is essential is that love is the guarantor of the universal, since it alone elucidates the disjunction as the simple law of a situation. That the value of the humanity-function  $H(x)$  is dependent, for the female position, on the existence of love, can be put just as well: the female position demands for the  $H(x)$  a guarantee of universality. It only knots the components of  $H$  on this condition. The female position sustains itself, in its singular relation to love, so that it can be clear that "for all  $x$ , [there is an]  $H(x)$ , whatever the effects of the disjunction, or of the disjunctions (for the sexual is *perhaps* not the only one)."

I make here a supplementary turn of the screw with regard to the Lacanian formulas of sexuation. Very schematically: Lacan divides the phallic function  $\Phi(x)$ . He assigns the universal quantifier to the male position (for-every-man), and defines the female position by a combination of the existential and of negation, which means to say that woman is not-all.

This position is to an extent very classical. Hegel, saying that woman is the irony of community, pointed to this effect of the existential border by which woman breaches the all that men strive to consolidate.

But this is the strict effect of the exercise of the function  $\Phi(x)$ . The most clear result of what I have been saying is that *the humanity function  $H(x)$  does not coincide with the function  $\Phi(x)$* . With regard to the function  $H(x)$ , it is in effect woman who sustains the universal totality, and it is the male position that metaphorically disseminates the possibilities [*virtualités*] of the composition-one of the  $H$ .

Love is that which, splitting the  $H(x)$  from the  $\Phi(x)$ , restores to "women," across the entire extent of the truth-procedures, the universal quantifier.

-translated by justin clemens

1 The distinction is made here between the French "historique" and "historial" deriving from the French reception of Heidegger. Historial implies a non-empirical concept - Tr.

2 *Forçage* - a term from mathematical set theory which designates the practice of "forcing" an indiscernible - Tr.