



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

Research Commons

<http://researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz/>

## Research Commons at the University of Waikato

### Copyright Statement:

The digital copy of this thesis is protected by the Copyright Act 1994 (New Zealand).

The thesis may be consulted by you, provided you comply with the provisions of the Act and the following conditions of use:

- Any use you make of these documents or images must be for research or private study purposes only, and you may not make them available to any other person.
- Authors control the copyright of their thesis. You will recognise the author's right to be identified as the author of the thesis, and due acknowledgement will be made to the author where appropriate.
- You will obtain the author's permission before publishing any material from the thesis.

**Sex, Metaphysics, and Mental ‘Dis-ease’**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

in

**Philosophy, Societies and Cultures**

at

**The University of Waikato**

by

**Jane Alexandra Cook**



The  
**University  
of Waikato**  
*Te Whare Wānanga  
o Waikato*

2012



## **Acknowledgements**

The researching and writing of this thesis has truly been a ‘fantastic voyage’ made possible and enriched by the contributions of many. My very grateful thanks to the University of Waikato for the doctoral scholarship that enabled this work, and to my chief and assistant supervisors, Tracy Bowell and Carolyn Michelle, and all those in the Philosophy and Societies & Cultures Departments, for their knowledge, guidance, friendship, and the freedom to explore. Many thanks also to Luce Irigaray for the guidance of her writings, and for the opportunity to attend and learn from her seminar at the University of Nottingham in 2010.

With love and heartfelt thanks, I dedicate this work to my family, and especially to the memory of my mother Doreen, to my partner Jan and her family, and to all the wonderful women who participated in, and inspired the theory and ideas behind, this (re)search. It is you who gave passion, wind, and wings to the journey. I also dedicate this endeavour to Kayla Wright, in the hope that, one day, things will be different.



## Abstract

The ancient Greek philosopher *Epicurus* believed that our metaphysics determines our state of mind: a correct view of the nature of human and worldly existence brings inner peace and tranquillity; an incorrect view, inner turmoil. More recently, Australian philosopher John Bigelow lamented that, despite over 2000 years of theorizing, philosophers have yet to reach consensus on a correct metaphysics. This thesis posits the source of this metaphysical discontent to be the Platonic/Aristotelian conception of *essence* (or form) as a purely immaterial, male preserve, thereby reducing woman to the material source, (*Logical*) properties and (sexual) demise of man's essential being; this phallogocentric misconception impelling a history of further misconceptions of essence, and of the metaphysical theories and binary logic based upon it. Through the construction of a genealogy and critique of various historical (re)conceptions and permutations of essence, I theorize the existence of an originary *spirogenetic* essence that causes, determines and motivates the (whole) individual, species, and sexuate form, function, growth, and development of every human being, the metaphysical and symbolic denial of this essence resulting in, not just inner turmoil, but some forms of mental disorder.

Empirical research into female self-development and eating disorders yielded support for the hypothesis of a spirogenetic essence and essentially whole, subjective (sexual) female self, the metaphysically based, familial/socially imposed denial, (de)construction and demonization of which is causing its fragmentation and loss, and the existential need to reconstruct this real, 'de-formed' sexual female self/body into the ideal feminine 'form' - the *perfect pretend self* - that will earn Paternal recognition, love, approval, and thus, ongoing subjective existence. While in modern, pre-feminist times, this perfect self was conceived and constructed as the sexual *object* of male desire, appropriation and control, in these post-feminist, post-modern times in which boys/men are reclaiming the feminine, girls/women have no option but to do what Plato advised, and 'become a man'. That is, they must hide/erase their real sexual female self/body and attain the boyishly perfect form/function that promises (limited) imitative access to phallic subjectivities and identities.

Failure to attain or maintain this perfect, pretend (prophylactic) self, and a consequent state of *existential distress*, is resulting in eating and associated disorders, as an inner, self-adjudicated battle to control, punish, purify, desexualize, defeminize, and thus perfectly 're-form', the real ('Eve-il') sexual female self, as a means of subjective *survival*. This understanding resituates current discursive approaches to *anorexia/bulimia* as part of its pathogenic origin; resolution of these and associated existential (dis)orders requiring the metaphysical/social/discursive recognition of what Plato/Aristotle denied: a sexed, spirogenetic essence that is the source of persisting sameness *and* difference, fixity *and* fluidity, unity *and* plurality, and thus, of an essentially whole, subjective fe/male self that can only fully exist, develop, and be constructed within enduring bonds of unconditional, intersubjective recognition and love. It is within this *spirogenetic* model of human and worldly existence - as it frees patriarchal man from his forbidden, feared, feminizing, ho(m)osexual desires - that I glimpse that long-sought Epicurean state of peace, contentment, and 'ease'.



## Table of Contents

<b><u>Section I:</u></b>	<b>Metaphysics, Essences and Sexes</b>	
Chapter 1	<i>Metaphysics and its Discontents</i> .....	1
Chapter 2	<i>A Genealogy of Essence</i> .....	19
Chapter 3	<i>Rethinking Essence and Subjectivity</i> .....	81
<b><u>Section II:</u></b>	<b>Research: Is there a Spirogenetic Essence and Essential Female Self?</b>	
Chapter 4	<i>(Re-)Conceptions of Anorexia</i> .....	105
Chapter 5	<i>Silentstones: Real, Lost and Pretend Selves</i> .....	155
Chapter 6	<i>Life Cycle of the Essential Female</i> .....	249
<b><u>Section III:</u></b>	<b>Reconceptions of Essence, Subjectivity and Metaphysics</b>	
Chapter 7	<i>A Sexed, Spirogenetic Model</i> .....	287





## **Section I:**

## **Metaphysics, Essences, and Sexes**

### **Chapter 1**

#### ***Metaphysics and its Discontents***

This thesis sets out to present a theoretical argument and empirical support for the seemingly counterintuitive proposition that philosophy is making us sick; or, more specifically, that our metaphysics is making us mentally ill. While I might like to claim this as a totally new and original idea, the possibility was in fact mooted around two and a half thousand years ago by the ancient Greek philosopher, *Epicurus*, who held the belief that our metaphysics determines our state of mind: a “correct” view of the nature of reality and human existence brings inner peace and tranquillity, an incorrect one, inner turmoil (cited in *Diogenes*, Bk.10, §24).

For the ancient Greeks, an avid curiosity about (and desire to know and understand) the nature of worldly and human existence was fuelled by a more pressing need to know what in the world was real and enduring (and why), and what was not. According to *skeptics* such as Pyrrho, only if philosophers could correctly identify and separate the real from the illusory, and then correctly identify and define real things that have a definite, stable, knowable existence, could they ever hope to achieve an accurate and lasting knowledge of the nature of that reality. Therefore, for philosophers such as Plato who were wishing to counter the skeptics’ claim that reality is indefinite, immeasurable, undecidable, and therefore unknowable, it was necessary to produce a metaphysics that would correctly identify and define a fixed, perceivable structure for reality, thus affirming the possibility of - and creating - knowledge of that structure. For only an accurate knowledge and understanding of human, worldly and cosmic existence would enable the correct explanation, prediction and thus control of natural phenomena, thereby removing fear of the unknown, and permitting man to happily exist within, interact with, and utilize his natural surroundings. And only if abstract entities such as ‘truth’, ‘goodness’ and ‘beauty’ could be justifiably conceived as having a real, stable and enduring existence - and thus, a nature that was knowable and definable - might philosophers be in a position to formulate

and espouse universal moral principles and standards of ‘good’ conduct and ‘right’ living, with the goal of bringing happiness and contentment to all (Guthrie, 1967, p. 17, 90). Situated within this context, Epicurus’ belief that a correct metaphysical account of reality was necessary for the successful and harmonious existence of the individual (and thus of the *socius* and *polis*) begins to make sense.

Furthermore, Epicurus’ philosophy appears to be as relevant to twenty-first century life and philosophical discourse as it was to the lives of the ancient Greeks. As the history and discoveries of Western science have shown us, it is through more clearly coming to know what, how and why animate and inanimate things exist, what is persisting and immutable, and what is transient and changeable, that we are, ideally, better placed to successfully interact with and therefore survive and flourish within the world at large. There is just one problem, however. As Australian philosopher John Bigelow (2006) laments, despite over two thousand years of discussion and debate, metaphysicians have yet to reach consensus on a correct metaphysics - whether it concern the general nature of reality, or the specific nature of human existence. Whether one is (like Anaximander) a *monist* that perceives the universe as being composed of only one substance, or (like Plato) a *dualist* who sees it as having both immaterial and material components; whether (like Heraclitus) one sees reality as being a state of constant flux or *change*, or (like Parmenides) a state of permanent and immutable *sameness*, modern continental and analytic philosophers have maintained and perpetuated the diverse range of seemingly irreconcilable metaphysical viewpoints that they inherited from the ancient Greeks.

For example, Anaximander’s monist view of the world and larger cosmos as primordially an infinite, indefinite mass of undifferentiated matter that he calls the “*apeiron*” (Guthrie, 1967, p. 27), and that potentially contains the oppositional qualities (such as wet/dry, hot/cold) that gave rise to the physical universe, finds contemporary expression in the *physicalist* monism of Ullin Place and Jack Smart. Although Place and Smart focus on the relationship of the human mind and brain rather than the larger cosmos, their monism follows Anaximander’s in reducing all things mental to the one physical origin. Place (1956, p. 47) uses reductionist analysis in his type-identity theory to assert that the material world is all that exists, since non-material entities such as mental processes are simply neural processes in the material brain. For Place, in the same way that lightening just *is* electric charges, mental processes just *are* - and will eventually be neurologically and

correlatively reduced to and explained as - physical processes. Smart (1963, p. 88) explains this monistic view of the relationship between physical and mental states in terms of Gottlob Frege's puzzle regarding the (difference in) meaning of the terms 'Morning Star' and 'Evening Star'. In the same way that the Evening Star *just is* the Morning Star, with each term simply conveying a different sense of the same referent (Venus), so mental states *just are* physical states, with each state simply a different sense of the same referent - the brain.

Plato's *dualistic* view of worldly and human existence, on the other hand, draws upon the Pythagorean idea of the cosmos as shaped and ordered by fixed forms and limits to posit a transcendent and eternal realm of perfect immaterial 'Forms' or 'Souls' as the one true and fixed reality; these Forms finding only imperfect, imitative expression in the transient physical world of corporeally confined beings. Thus, for Plato, soul and body are two distinctly separate ontological categories – transcendent soul (and mind) being superior to transient body, and neither one able to be reduced to the other (Guthrie, 1967). As with Anaximander's monism, there has recently been renewed interest in the dualistic metaphysics espoused firstly by Plato and later René Descartes, as demonstrated by the writings of David Chalmers. Chalmers (1996) asserts that, like space and time, consciousness is a fundamental component of universal and human existence, and so the conscious mind cannot be metaphysically reduced to or explained in terms of physical properties. He therefore argues that the reductive physicalist argument of Place and Smart's Identity theory - that the mind just is the brain and nothing more - leaves the mind/body problem unresolved, since there will always be an "explanatory gap" (p. 110) in any physicalist attempt to explain the properties (or qualia) of conscious mental states (e.g. perceptions, feelings) in terms of the physical properties of the brain and behaviour. There will also be a gap in any scientific attempt to explain how the mind affects the physical world, since non-material mental processes such as thoughts and colours just cannot be perceived or defined as neurobiological or physical entities (Mitchell, 2006, np.). Chalmers therefore looks to a science of consciousness that will construct "some new fundamental principles, to bridge the gap between neuroscience and subjective experience" (1998, np.).<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Chalmers' notion of an explanatory gap is contested by Dennett, Jackson and others (see Alter & Walter, 2006).

This dualistic view of reality espoused by Plato (and later, Descartes and Chalmers) countered the metaphysics of *Heraclitus* (1979), who, in rejecting fixed forms of existence or knowledge, had no thought to divide human or universal reality into material and immaterial components. While Heraclitus took the monistic view that reality is underpinned and ordered by a universal “*logos*”, a material intelligence that is the fundamental organizing principle of the cosmos, notions of (Platonic) permanence and immutability of Form find no place in his metaphysics. In fact, the only thing permanent about Heraclitus’ reality is its permanent state of *flux* or continuous change. For, as with the element of fire that symbolizes his view of the world, nothing stays still or the same from one moment to the next, the destruction of one thing enabling the creation of another. This constant change occurs due to the fact that all material things are composed of binarily opposed qualities that, in co-existing within the one thing, are always at war with each other, thus denying a fixed, singular form and nature to those things. However, while a river may be constantly flowing and thus always changing, this change is the basis of the river’s ongoing existence. Hence, for Heraclitus, the constant flux of opposites (or contraries) is the source of life itself (Guthrie, 1967, p. 44).

This belief that reality has no fixed form but is basically pure fluidity has persisted throughout two millennia of philosophical thought, and now finds contemporary expression within, for example, the deconstructionist thinking of Jacques Derrida, and the poststructuralist metaphysics of Judith Butler. Holding to his (Saussurean) structuralist roots that posit the interplay of difference as the source of identity and meaning, Derrida (1998) claims that the traditional metaphysical view of reality, subjectivity and language as having a fixed, singular, and immutable form has been falsely created and perpetuated by the logocentrically fixed, oppositional system of *binary logic* that has structured and constrained Western philosophical texts and concepts since the times and works of Plato and Aristotle. It is the dichotomous, hierarchical definition of such concepts as self/other, presence/absence, mind/body, good/evil, being/nothingness and male/female - in which the second term is simply a negative, devalued and excluded version of the first - that Derrida sees as falsely and forcibly imposing notions of logical singularity, fixity and determinacy on our metaphysical view of reality. He therefore works to disrupt the fixedly oppositional structure of metaphysics and language, and to reunite the binary terms into a “systematic play of differences” (1981, p. 27), by introducing a third or ‘hinge’ term - that is, a term that is the ‘trace’ or the ‘undecidable’ origin of the other two - into the ‘excluded middle’

of every dualism. By working to deconstruct the reductive binary logic of our concepts and language, Derrida attempts to free up and enable metaphysical theory to view and represent reality, being and truth as always diverse, fluidly mutable and 'impure' entities that therefore always defer the possibility of a fixed, singular and determinate knowledge and definition of these entities.

Judith Butler (1990) draws on Derridean deconstructionist strategies in order to further contest and destabilize traditional humanist and feminist notions of reality and human subjectivity as naturally fixed, singular and enduring. She argues that sexed, gendered and sexual subjectivity and identity are being constantly produced and destabilized by multiple and often contradictory discourses which, through their repressive regulation of libidinal desires, *construct* multiple and always changing subjectivities and identities in every seemingly fixed and singularly subjective being. For Butler, any appearance of permanence and stability - whether of the immaterial mind or the (sexed) material body - is simply the *illusory effect* of the repetitive, performative enacting and thus "melancholic" incorporation of discursively produced, forbidden, and thus repressed (sexual) desires (ibid. p. 68). Mind, body and soul are therefore simply the fluid, mutable, discursive products or effects of "speech acts that bring into existence that which they name" (interview, Osborne & Segal, 1993). For Butler, then, as for Heraclitus, it is the *logos* (whether of discourse or the universe) that constantly constructs and deconstructs the material world within an unceasing flow of movement and change.

It seems, then, that while the details may vary, the responses of modern and contemporary philosophers to the question: 'what is the nature of reality?' continue to echo those of the ancient Greeks - not only in their content and diversity, but also in their seemingly irresolvable *dissonance*. For to hold a 'monist' view of reality as either wholly material or wholly immaterial is, as Chalmers says, to reach an explanatory gap when attempting to reduce the non-material (mind) to the material (body) or *vice versa*. But to hold a 'dualist' view is to reach a similar impasse when attempting to explain how two ontologically distinct and irreducible substances such as the immaterial mind (or soul) and the material body are able to connect and interact with each other. If, on the other hand, one views (material and/or immaterial) reality as a state of constant flux, with things always already *becoming* rather than *being*, then this view precludes the conceptual and symbolic recognition of any fixed form, and thus, any persisting sameness or identity of being within

living things. It also therefore denies the possibility of definite and enduring representation and knowledge of the real world, since things must have persisting form and properties if they are to be recognized, defined and represented, and thereby become the objects (and subjects) of true propositions, and thus, lasting knowledge. This view also overlooks the more fundamental question of how change and difference can occur and be perceived, if there is no underlying form of enduring *sameness* against which to measure them. Conversely, if one views reality as simply a single, eternal, determinately immutable, *spiritual* substance, then the correspondingly transient, illusory, mutable *physical* world of the senses still remains beyond the grasp of human knowledge, with all forms of enduringly *same* physical existence also denied symbolic representation and definition. Thus, despite over two millennia of debate, philosophers have yet to produce a metaphysical theory that supports knowledge of - and inclusively, coherently and accurately describes - the nature of human and worldly existence.

Hence, if Epicurus was right about the power of metaphysics to beneficially or adversely affect our state of mind, then the widely varying and often contradictory contents of the philosophical canon would seem to have done very little over a very long time to create or foster a state of inner peace and tranquillity within the human psyche. And in fact, a closer look at certain metaphysical beliefs and concepts that have subsequently proved to be incorrect would suggest that some theories of the nature of human and worldly existence may actually have provided the historical and theoretical foundation and justification for extensive and ongoing degrees of turmoil and suffering - not only within the human *psyche* (mind), but also its *soma* (body).

There are numerous researchers, for example, who make a correlation between states of psychological depression, dispiritedness and inner turmoil in women and indigenous peoples (e.g. New Zealand Māori and Australian Koori), and their hegemonic colonization, domestication and oppression by and within European patriarchal cultures (Friedan, 1965; Awatere, 1984; hooks, 1984).<sup>2</sup> Betty Friedan, for example, writes of the depression and sense of futility - the suburban neurosis - experienced by the perfectly domesticated (white, middle-class) post-war American housewives who yearned for a *paid* job and a career “as

---

<sup>2</sup> According to Gramsci (1992), *hegemony* is the oppressive rule or dominance of one social, cultural or political group over another that is not simply imposed and maintained by force, but involves a degree of consent by the subjugated group, possibly through its inculcation with the beliefs, ideals and norms of the ruling group.

they ran the new electric waxer over the spotless kitchen floor” (1965, p. 16). Several feminist theorists have then related this oppression of women and minority groups to patriarchal language and metaphysical theories that have traditionally situated and defined the concepts ‘man’ and ‘woman’, and ‘white’ and ‘black’, in hierarchically opposed terms that privilege white men, and correspondingly objectify and degrade ‘women’, ‘blacks’ and all those perceived as *different* to the singularly (white) male subject. Aristotle’s philosophy, for instance, that,

It is the best for all tame animals to be ruled by human beings. For this is how they are kept alive. In the same way, the relationship between the male and the female is by nature such that the male is higher, the female lower, that the male rules and the female is ruled (*Politica*, 1254b 10-14)

was seen by American first wave feminist, Matilda Joslyn Gage, as having provided the ontological basis and justification for the historic and ongoing social, political, religious and economic domination and oppression of women within patriarchal cultures. For, as Gage wrote in 1893, Aristotle’s positioning of woman as inferior to man “was accepted by the church and all teaching of a contrary character declared heretical” (1980, p. 38). Thus, both Gage and American (second wave) feminist philosopher Mary Daly (1991) argue that the Christian church’s subsequent characterization of woman as the source and (reproductive) transmitter of ‘evil’ and ‘sin’ in the world has provided the moral justification and the ecclesiastical and state sanction for numerous acts of physical and psychological violation, torture, mutilation and incarceration of women (and all things female) - whether they be witches, nuns, or simply the wives, mothers, daughters, nieces or sisters of men.

It was Simone De Beauvoir (1953), however, who first correlated the social, political, religious and economic oppression of women with their philosophical conception and definition as the passive, irrational, sexually objectified ‘Other’ of the autonomously active, rational, free-willed, and thus superior male ‘Subject’. As De Beauvoir puts it,

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. (p. 16)



For De Beauvoir, women's subjugation and related oppression are not the result of any natural or biologically determined inferiority, but rather, the result of the metaphysical *definition* and social *construction* of girls into passive, will-less, servile women, perceived and valued only as the sexual/reproductive object of male pursuit and possession. On this basis, it seems that man's traditional metaphysical definition as the wholly autonomous, self-determining 'Subject' of language and philosophy may have served to justify and perpetuate (white, heterosexual) men's real domination and oppression not only of women, but of all those similarly defined as the inessential *feminine* 'Other' - whether they be "Negroes", "Jews", "aborigines" (ibid. p. 17), Māori, homosexuals or otherwise. And if this is indeed the case, then it seems that a biased and thus incorrect metaphysical theory may have provided the theoretical justification for vast amounts of suffering and inner turmoil in women and minority groups, and as such, represents historical and theoretical support for Epicurus' correlation of an incorrect and thus distorting metaphysics to a disturbed and discontented mind.

Other research suggests that it may be possible to extend this correlation between an incorrect metaphysics, oppression and a disturbed mind to account for the occurrence of (at least some) more severe mental disorders in women and minority groups. Several Māori mental health studies, for example, have indicated a strong link between various mental disorders experienced by Māori and their colonization and oppression by white European processes predicated on oppositional (Subject/Other) logic. A study by Liz Fenton and Te Wera Te Koutua (2000) suggests that, for Māori experiencing mental illness, reconnection with *whanau* (extended family) and *wairuatanga* (spiritual heritage) can set the foundation for recovery since "this foundation is missing because the traditional tribal nature of Maori culture has been gradually eroded by the effects of colonization and urbanization" (p. 10). The separation from traditional Māori ways and consequent "loss of identity" produced by cultural imperialism are thus seen as key elements in the causation and curing of disorders such as depression and drug/alcohol addiction. And, in the area of women's mental health, Phyllis Chesler (2005), for one, has proposed a causal link between *schizophrenia* and the "sex-role alienation" (p. 110) that most women experience when faced with familial or social pressures to adopt the submissive feminine sex role, especially if those pressures are imposed within tyrannically *repressive* and/or *abusive* environments (see also Szasz, 1961; Laing, 1975). These and similar studies suggest that the already postulated correlation between the disturbing, depressive effects of colonization/oppression and the 'incorrect'

metaphysics that binarily defines women and Māori as the inferior, objectified 'Other' may be extended to link at least some serious mental disorders to this illconceived metaphysics.

It is on the basis of this reasoning that I wish to extend the Epicurean theme of this thesis to posit a direct link between a biased, confused metaphysics and some forms of mental 'disorder', and conversely, between a coherent, inclusive metaphysics and mental 'order'. For, if it is indeed the case that an incorrect or inaccurate metaphysics is producing an inner or psychic disturbance that is at its extreme manifesting as mental disorder, then the search for an accurate metaphysical view of worldly and specifically human existence takes on a whole new meaning, import and urgency. To this end, then, I undertake (in Chapter 2) a genealogical and critical analysis of the metaphysical theories and concepts of various philosophers from ancient Greek times up to the present day, with the aim of exploring possible reasons and causes for the ongoing absence and elusiveness of a correct - or even a coherent - metaphysics. In Chapter 3, I then attempt to address what I identify as logical and conceptual inconsistencies or misconceptions within the works of these philosophers, in order to prepare the way for a rethinking of metaphysics, or what might in popular parlance be called a 'metaphysical makeover'. But before embarking on this genealogy, I will firstly narrow the historical and theoretical focus on what appears to be the main source(s) of our metaphysical discontent.

### **The Metaphysical Muddle**

Within the philosophical canon there are several contentious issues that might be seen as contributing to this continuing lack of consensus on a 'correct' metaphysics that gives an accurate and coherent account of reality as it is, and as we experience it. Along with the already cited dualist/monist, mind/body and fixed/fluid views of reality, the existence (or not) of God, the question of free will vs. determinism, and the nature of space and time are just some of the major issues that have been the cause and focus of longstanding metaphysical debate and disagreement. However, it is the doctrine of *essentialism* that has been one of the most enduringly and vigorously debated issues from the time and writings of Heraclitus, Plato and Aristotle, right up to the more recent metaphysics of Wittgenstein, Foucault, Derrida and Kripke, along with the contemporary feminist essentialist/constructionist debate, this issue continuing to shape and impede both traditional and feminist theories of reality, human subjectivity and language.

As mentioned earlier, *Heraclitus* believed that all things that exist within the spatio-temporal world are always and only ever in a state of continuous flux; that is, they have no persistently fixed, defined form or existence. Like fire, material reality is unbounded, and thus unknowable fluidity, movement and change. In contrast, *Parmenides* viewed reality as a single, eternally motionless and immutable being, able to be known and symbolically represented because of its enduring, unitary form and definition, but only via the mind's perception and abstract intellect - not the unreliable and illusory senses. Adopting this Parmenidean notion of an eternal, immutable reality, Plato nevertheless argued that, in order to be known and defined, reality could not just consist of a single, eternal, immutable *sameness*, but must also contain fixed forms of *difference*. For something to be known and identified as what it *is*, there must also be something that it *is not*. Hence Plato's - and later Aristotle's - formulation of *dualistic* models of reality and its representation is based on the premise that the existence and nature of earthly things and natural kinds is caused and determined by their *essence* - an immaterial, soul-like substance and generative principle that gives a fixed, unified, self-motivated form (and, for Aristotle, a self-actualizing, environmentally adaptive function) of being to otherwise inert, transient, fluidly chaotic matter. Further, the meaning or definition of the term representing a set of like things (or a natural kind) is fixed and determined by the essence and essential form and properties shared by those things, and distinguishing them from other, different things. Thus, explains Aristotle, "by 'form' I mean the essence of each thing, and its primary substance" (*Metaphysics* VII, 1032b1), and "a definition is an expression indicating the essence of a thing" (*Topics*, VII, §5).

This ancient essentialist belief that the nature of and relationship between things (and the meaning of the terms and propositions that represent them) is determined by their essential structure and properties finds contemporary expression in Ludwig Wittgenstein's early work. For example, in his *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1961), Wittgenstein describes reality and the thought and language that represent it as sharing the same logically fixed structure or form. But, where Plato and Aristotle locate that logical form within living things, for Wittgenstein, reality is a world "of facts, not of things" (*TLP*, 1.1), the existence and essential properties of things only *relationally* determined by their position within the same logical structure that underlies - and enables the truth possibility and thus the meaning of - all human languages. In saying that "the name means the object" (3.203), but

“only in the context of a proposition has a name meaning” (3.3), the *Tractatus* conceives an object as a dematerialized, textualized “mirror image” (6.13) that comes into existence as a result of the relational properties that are logically predicated of it. Hence, if we can decipher how names relate within the logical structure of a proposition, then we can know the essential properties of the worldly objects they represent. Since, for the Tractarian Wittgenstein, there are no *logical* objects (such as whole, physical beings or universal essences), logical propositions cannot describe the essential nature - the ‘What is it?’ - of physical things; they can only show us *how* these things must be logically related and defined for language to picture reality in the way that Wittgenstein believes it does.

Similarly, the *anti-essentialist* view of Heraclitus that things only ever exist in a state of fluid impermanence finds contemporary expression in the theories of modern and deconstructionist philosophers, such as Foucault (1972) and Derrida (1978), who have worked to free our understandings of reality, subjectivity and language from notions of (binary) logical fixity, singularity, and determinacy, in order to view subjectivity and meaning as always fluidly mutable and multiple. For these philosophers, as for the feminist philosophers and theorists (such as De Beauvoir [1953], Moi [1985] and Butler [1990]) who have identified essentialist notions of the supposed ‘natural’ or ‘biological’ inferiority of women as forming the basis and justification for their oppression, the term ‘essence’ has become little more than a dirty word, and the espousal of essentialism a sign of philosophical regressiveness. Andrew Sayer (1997) goes as far as to suggest that ‘essentialism’ has become “a term of abuse which silences or short-circuits arguments, being irredeemably tainted by association with racism and sexism” (p. 453). Toril Moi (1985a), for example, attacks and dismisses French philosopher Luce Irigaray’s deconstruction and refiguring of traditional (‘phallogocentric’) notions of human subjectivity on the basis of an alleged deployment of the same form of essentialist logic for which Irigaray has previously castigated dominant patriarchal (philosophical and psychoanalytic) discourses:

Having shown that so far femininity has been produced exclusively in relation to the logic of the same, she falls for the temptation to produce her own positive theory of femininity. But, as we have seen, to define ‘woman’ is necessarily to essentialize her. (p. 139)

Moi interprets Irigaray’s attempt to (re)conceptualize a specifically female subjectivity (based in and reflecting a specifically and explicitly female sexual morphology) as

evidence that Irigaray is simply perpetuating the same biologically essentializing and universalizing tactic that patriarchy has historically employed in its oppression of women, thereby impeding the poststructuralist refiguring of subjectivity, sexual identity and difference as always fluid and diverse. Adriana Caverero therefore appears to be accurately describing the experience of a late twentieth century feminist essentialist philosopher finding herself in social constructionist company when she says,

[I]f she does not pronounce the magic word ‘multiple subjectivity’, she will probably be attacked as an across-the-board antiquated, European, essentialist metaphysical thinker. Additionally, she knows that she will cut the sad figure of someone not prepared for the coming third millennium. (cited in Perpich, 2004, p. 393)

However, (seemingly) essentialist philosophers and theorists have not just taken the bullets; they’ve also fired some of their own. In response to the feminist poststructuralist de-essentializing of the female body, Germaine Greer protests that, in denying essentialism (whether biological or psychological) in order to claim equality, it seems that women have been rendered even *more* neutered, male-defined, and devoid of female identity than before:

Actually I think there is something about being born with a double-x chromosome; I think there is something about being a maker of eggs instead of sperm...These constitute genuine differences. In the past they’ve been considered as marks of inferiority. Now that you’re not allowed to consider them as marks of inferiority, you’re telling me that they don’t signify anything at all. (Wardle, 1999)

Thus, after more than two millennia of often vitriolic debate, whether it concern the nature of reality, human subjectivity or language, pro- and anti-essentialist philosophers are seemingly still no closer to resolving the problem of *essence*. Because this issue is so closely tied - if not foundational - to several other metaphysical quandaries (in particular the monist/dualist, mind/body, and freewill/determinism dichotomies), it appears that the notion of a fixed, determinate essence may be the primary obstacle in the ongoing search for a correct or accurate metaphysics. But if Plato viewed essence as the source of not just persisting sameness, but also difference of form, and if Aristotle originally conceived essence as the first cause of not just the unified form, but also the growth, development and movement of a living being, then how did the notion of essence come to imply only fixed, universal, immutable sameness? This shift in meaning appears to have begun with Plato and Aristotle’s further and androcentric conception of essence as a purely immaterial, male

preserve; a conception that reflected the sexism of their patriarchal culture and times, and that impelled a trail of further misconceptions of essence, as pro- and anti-essentialist (male) philosophers have striven to justify knowledge(s), construct a coherent metaphysical theory, and thus retain control, of human and worldly existence.

The explicit androcentrism that pervades the texts of Plato, Aristotle, and much of the rest of the philosophical canon has already been extensively documented and critiqued by a number of feminist philosophers (De Beauvoir [1953], Lloyd [1984], Fuss [1989], Irigaray [1991], Nye [2004]). While some of these philosophers view Platonic, Aristotelian and other canonical texts as only *extrinsically* and thus redeemably sexist (that is, the phallogocentric bias can be removed without substantially altering the theories), others view the texts and their concepts and ideas as *intrinsically* sexist, and thus needing to be either rejected as irredeemable, or revised and reconceptualized in a gender-neutral or gender-inclusive way (Witt, 1996). Adopting the latter position, I believe the notion of essence that we have inherited from Plato and Aristotle to be *intrinsically* phallogocentrically biased, since this bias has distorted both our metaphysical understandings of the nature of essence, and all related meanings of the term ‘essence’. This misconceived essence has then become the basis and justification for hierarchical, binarily reductive, and thus distorted metaphysical and linguistic representations and definitions of reality which, through their role in the construction of subjectivity, have served to *disrupt* - rather than assist - the development of subjective *selfhood*. For this distorted conception of essence and the (binary) structures of metaphysics and language that it underpins, in being based upon the lack of recognition and representation of a real, autonomously defined *female essence* (and therefore an essential component of subjective being) are - through their (de)construction of girls/women - resulting in the fragmentation and loss of the essential, subjective, female self. It is in *this* way, I believe, that the metaphysical foundations for the development of mental disorder in *some* women (and some men) are currently being laid down in the psyches of all Western girls/women (and men).<sup>3</sup> It is on the basis of these metaphysical, linguistic and psychological consequences that I am seeing the phallogocentric bias underpinning Platonic and Aristotelian understandings of essence as intrinsically sexist, and thus, unable to be simply neutralized without altering the structure and meanings of

---

<sup>3</sup> Explanation as to why only *some* girls/women might develop a mental disorder when the foundations are being laid down in *all* girls/women is presented in Section II.

essence, as well as those of the various philosophical, psychological and linguistic discourses it has informed.

Thus, the main premise of this thesis is that the seemingly irresolvable dispute between essentialist and anti-essentialist philosophers is based on a metaphysical *misconception of essence*, which originated with Plato and Aristotle, and which has subsequently distorted and thus undermined Western philosophy's understandings of metaphysics, language and the development of human subjectivity. This misconceived notion of essence that underlies and has given rise to most (if not all) of the seemingly irresolvable 'dualist/monist', 'mind/body', 'free will/determinism' and other debates that continue to divide and derail metaphysical discourse, has created a state of inner turmoil and discontent within the individual and collective human psyche that, in contemporary times, is manifesting as mental disorders such as eating and associated depressive, anxiety, and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Hence, far from rejecting the (phallogcentrically biased) Platonic/Aristotelian notion of essence, the aim of this thesis is to uncover and explore the origin, genealogy, method and nature of its historical and metaphysical (mis)conceptions; to then argue and gather empirical support for the existence of a *female* (as well as individual and species) essence; and finally, to reconceptualize the notion of essence from a non-phallogcentric, non-binary, sexually differentiated perspective. For it is this reconceived essence that may then present the foundation for the construction of a 'correct' - or at least a more inclusive and thus more accurate - metaphysical model of human and worldly existence, and thus, for a rethinking of currently dysfunctional models for the development, nature and knowledge of the subjective self. On this basis, a reconception of essence may hopefully present itself as the metaphysical and linguistic solution - and also preventative - for many forms of currently biomedically treated (but unresolved) mental or psychosomatic disorders.

The immediate task, however, is to construct (in Chapter 2) a genealogy of various metaphysical theories of *essence* as firstly expounded by the ancient Greek philosophers, and as they developed within medieval and Enlightenment thought, and within contemporary analytic, continental, and postmodernist theories of reality, subjectivity, language and meaning. In this genealogy, I explicate the various pro- and anti-essentialist theories using the two notions of essence initially identified by Aristotle (1976) - and later reformulated by John Locke (1990) - as the *real* and the *nominal* essence. According to

Aristotle, the ‘real’ (or ontological) essence is the active ‘soul-like’ component that causes, persistingly forms, and motivates a living thing, thereby defining and actualizing its specific nature (or “thinghood”<sup>4</sup>), whilst the ‘nominal’ (or linguistic) essence is the set of properties that fixes and determines the meaning of a (natural kind) term, and that thereby identifies and groups its worldly referents (as a species or genus, for example). The purpose of this genealogy is to provide an account of just how the Aristotelian notion of essence as a source of enduringly whole form, growth, movement, sameness *and* (species) difference came to so narrowly (and pejoratively) represent only a fixed, determinate sameness of being, with a view to then reconceiving essence in a form that may present the foundation for a coherent metaphysical model of human subjectivity.

Having constructed this genealogy, in Chapter 3, I critically analyse and discuss the various perspectives on essence in order to gather and present theoretical support for the argument that, whether they be pro- or anti-essentialist, theories of metaphysics, language and subjectivity have always either explicitly or implicitly depended upon *essentialist* concepts, logic and definitions. Some form of real (and nominal) essentialism therefore seems to play a necessary role in our experiences, representations, and theoretical understandings of human and other worldly existence, this role reflecting Aristotle’s doctrine that we initially perceive things as whole, unified forms rather than as jumbles of sense data. However, these theories have been distorted, undermined and also diametrically opposed by their unquestioned assumption and use of a phallogentrically biased misconception of essence as a fixed, oppositionally defined, fully determinative *property* of immutable and universal sameness. Therefore, by separating Aristotle’s ‘real’ essence from its history of phallogentric misconceptions, I argue for a reconception of essence as an originally and inseparably mindbody or ‘*spirogenetic*’ entity that causes, determines and motivates the whole *individual, species, and sexuate* form, function, growth, and definition of a living being, thus enabling and co-operating with the sociolinguistic construction of a therefore essentially subjective, fixed but also fluid, autonomous but also relational self.<sup>5</sup> If this argument for a (non-phallogentric) re-conception of essence can be successfully achieved, then it becomes plausible to hypothesize that current sociolinguistic constructions of female selfhood, as shaped and generated by an underlying metaphysics

---

<sup>4</sup> See Sachs’ (2006, §5) explanation of Aristotle’s notion of ‘thinghood’ as the organized, unified *form* of a living thing.

<sup>5</sup> A full account of this sexed ‘spirogenetic’ essence and essential self is presented in Chapter 3.



and language that deny a female essence, may be creating the disrupted, (di)stressed, psychosexual foundations for some kinds of psychosomatic disorder or ‘dis-ease’.

This hypothesis then forms the basis and justification for undertaking research into the nature and processes of development of the female self, and the development in some girls and women of the eating disorders *anorexia* and *bulimia nervosa*. The aim is to seek empirical support for the hypothesised existence of a real female, spirogenetic essence, and thus, an essentially whole, relationally subjective, female self that - through familial, social and discursive (de)construction - is becoming fragmented and lost to consciousness, thereby, and in the face of subjective non-existence, resulting in the occurrence of mental ‘disorder’, as an ordered form of *survival* of that self. Thus, in Section II, Chapter 4 focuses on the disorders *anorexia* and *bulimia nervosa*, as situated and explored within current biomedical, psychological, and feminist psychoanalytic and socio-cultural discourses, and critiques of their perspectives. Chapter 5 presents the theoretical and methodological basis for - and data from - research into the stages and processes of development of female selfhood, as they are shaped by familial, social and discursive influences, and as they may be related to the development of these eating disorders. Chapter 6 presents and interprets the results of this research within the theoretical framework constructed in Chapter 4, thereby providing answers to the questions: Is there empirical support for the existence of an originary spirogenetic essence and essential female self, the metaphysically and sociolinguistically imposed fragmentation and loss of which is creating the generalized psychosomatic foundations for the development of mental disorder in women? If so, what are some of the essential features of this originary self? And what are the further conditions under which this fragmentation of self may develop into recognized mental disorder?

Chapter 7 brings together the philosophical argument for the recognition of a real essence within our experiences, representations, theories and knowledges of reality (Section I), and the empirical findings regarding the existence of a real female essence and essentially subjective female self (Section II), with a view to reconceptualizing essence from an impartial, sexually differentiated perspective. I then explore the implications of this reconceived ‘spirogenetic’ notion of essence for our current understandings of metaphysics, language and meaning, and for current models of the nature and processes of development of subjectivity. In effecting a metaphysical makeover, I show how the notion

of a spirogenetic essence - through its reshaping of metaphysics and language - dissolves longstanding philosophical problems such as the essentialist/constructionist, mind/body, and freewill/determinism dichotomies. It also enables a reconception of the development of subjectivity as the spirogenetically based *essentio-social* (and thus inter-textual) construction of the psychosomatic self, and in so doing, this reconceived essence presents itself as the means to the uninterrupted and therefore successful attainment of sexed subjectivity, and thus, the elimination of some (if not many) forms of mental 'dis-order'.



## **Chapter 2**

### ***A Genealogy of Essence***

You use names for things as though they rigidly, persistently endured; yet even the stream into which you step a second time is not the one you stepped into before. (Nietzsche, 1996, p. 52)

Although pre-Socratic thinkers such as Pythagoras and Parmenides had already conceived of reality and human 'being' in terms of fixed, limited, persisting and unchanging forms, it is not until the writings of Plato and Aristotle that the notion of *essence* - or, in Greek, *ousia* - enters metaphysical theory as the soul-based entity or substance that 'sub-stands' and thus unites, defines, and represents these immutable forms and qualities of being. This genealogy of *pro-essentialist* metaphysical perspectives will therefore begin with the works of Plato and Aristotle, while the classification of *anti-essentialist* perspectives will begin with Heraclitus' view of reality as unbounded fluidity. For it was partly as a response to this denial of a permanent, unchanging reality, and the consequent impossibility of attaining absolute knowledge of that reality (along with the impossibility of positing absolute moral principles to guide human behaviour) that Plato formulated his essence-based theory of being (Guthrie, 1967, p. 87).

### **Pro-essentialist philosophers**

#### **Plato**

Faced with the Heraclitean view of a mind-infused but formless, fluid material world of space and time that is therefore never the same or knowable from one instant to the next, Plato countered with his dualistic division of reality into fixed, immortal *form* and transient, changeable *matter*. In this view, true reality is found in a transcendent otherworld of perfect, immortal, immaterial, universal 'Forms', the nature of which is fixed and determined by the unique essence or '*ousia*' of each Form of being (Sachs, 2006, §3). The immediate, physical world that appears to our senses is composed of a multitude of imperfect, ever-changing, material objects that are merely imitations of their corresponding Form, and that, as transient appearances, can never be the objects of universal knowledge. However, the essence of each immortal Form is not only the first principle or *cause* of that

soul/Form and its imperfect manifestations, but also fixedly delimits and defines them. It is therefore the essence or *ousia* of physical things that, in creating their stable, enduring, universal definition, presents Plato with the possibility of fixed truths and certain knowledge of reality. For the fixed definition of the essential Form of physical things also constitutes and thus fixes the meaning of the *term* that represents them, thereby enabling language to truthfully represent and describe the world.

By conceiving reality in terms of transcendent Forms and base, unbounded matter, Plato also reconfigures earlier Greek ideas about the relationship of the rational mind to matter. Where Heraclitus had posited a universal *logos* as the rational principle underlying a fluidly mutable material world, Plato separates reason/logos from matter and relocates it within the immaterial mind. He then divides this rational, logical mind into two forms - an individual and a universal - giving the former a temporary existence within the human body, and the latter (as *Logos*) an immortal existence within the otherworld of perfect Forms (Lloyd, 1994, p. 4). In this way, Plato distinguishes and separates the rational *mind* (and its logical principles) from the world of transient matter, and associates it with the corporeally imprisoned, immortal *soul*. For it is only via the highest, most rational contemplations of the mind that man's soul may sublimate and transcend its physical desires and limitations, and thus perceive, know, and ultimately (re)unite with the netherworld of perfect Forms. It is this essence-based, dualistically divided view of reality that Plato hopes will counter Heraclitean fluidity, transience and thus agnosticism, and present the metaphysical grounds for positing a stable, permanent reality, absolute rational and moral principles, a true and lasting knowledge of these entities, and also, the possibility of immortality for those who realize perfect beauty, truth and goodness.

Plato thus employs the 'Allegory of the cave' (*Republic*, 1994) to explain the relationship of the transcendent world of fixed and perfect Forms to the lowly world of transient, sensible matter. Here he characterizes humans beguiled and held captive by their senses as prisoners within the darkened world that is their cave, who believe the fleeting, indistinct shadows on the wall to be the true reality, rather than the objects that are causing the shadows. To stay within the cave is therefore to remain ignorant of the true nature of reality. But to leave and walk outside into the sunlight is to realize that it is the objects and not their shadows that are truly real. Similarly, it is by utilizing their mind and higher intellect to rise above the darkened world of the senses and glimpse the sunlit world of

eternal Forms that enlightened men will realize the latter to be the true reality that is the enduring (and thus, knowable) cause of the fleeting (and thus, unknowable) world of the senses. Plato therefore exhorts men to come out of sensory darkness and into the intellectual sunlight, where they may come to know absolute truth, beauty and goodness. For it is only when one raises the transcendent, rational mind above the untrustworthy, irrational senses and perceives with the intellect the essential Form of 'Man', for example, that the essential properties of its transitory particular - material man - can be known and defined, and thereby provide the fixed, universal and determinate meaning of the term 'man'.

With this dualistic view of reality and language, Plato becomes the first philosopher to make a distinction between the definition of a *non-linguistic* entity that is (for him) the universal Form or Idea, and the definition of the *linguistic term* that represents that Form and its worldly instances (Witt, 1989, p. 36). True and lasting knowledge of reality (and particularly absolute beauty and goodness) can only be attained through the rational mind's *perception* (and recollection) of the non-linguistic, essence-based definition of perfect, universal forms, not through the 'shadowy' and unreliable images and impressions of the bodily senses. Whilst Plato sees the physical body as capable of evincing great beauty, its deceptive sense perceptions and distasteful, lustful desires ultimately render that body a hindrance to the higher pursuits of the inspired, wisdom-seeking soul temporarily imprisoned within it. As the 'wisewoman' *Diotima* is reported to say in the *Symposium* (1951, p. 95),

What may we suppose to be the felicity of the man who sees absolute beauty in its essence, pure and unalloyed, who, instead of a beauty tainted by human flesh and colour and a mass of perishable rubbish, is able to apprehend divine beauty where it exists apart and alone?

For Plato, then, it is through the rational control and sublimation of one's unruly senses, (sexual) desires and inclinations that man may free his mind to engage in the intellectual pursuit, recollection and exchange of knowledge of the real, immaterial, *ousiatic* (or essence-based) world, and thereby attain the ultimate goal of the soul's beatific vision of - and divinely immortalizing union with - pure wisdom, beauty and goodness.

However, Plato does not just confine essences to the immortal, immutable world of souls and their perfect Forms of being. As the following passage from the *Timaeus* reveals, he also conceives them as the sole preserve of men:

It is only males who are created directly by the gods and are given souls...In this situation, obviously it is only men who are complete human beings and can hope for ultimate fulfilment; the best a woman can hope for is to become a man. (90e)

Plato thus associates men and maleness with the essential soul, its rational mind and certain knowledge (of its perfect Form), and women and femaleness with soulless, fluidly formless (and thus ignorant, unknowable) matter that must depend on man's Form for any definable, knowable existence (*Timaeus*, 50d). Whether she is the material aspect of that form, or (poorly) imitates its masculine shape and functions, Plato sees the female as simply a defective, deformed male.<sup>6</sup> This sexual characterization and division of metaphysical and moral properties is something that Plato inherited from the Pythagoreans who associated *maleness* with light, unity, limit and goodness, and *femaleness* with darkness, plurality, the unlimited, and the bad (Guthrie, 1967, p. 36). However, it is not until Plato's metaphysical theory and its privileging and exclusive correlation of man with transcendent soul/Form that woman comes to be pejoratively conceived as base, unbounded, sensually uncontrolled, perishable *matter*. Denied her own essentially whole, enduring Form, 'woman' is therefore metaphysically denied the capacity to *exist* and be ontologically (and thus, linguistically) defined and known on her own terms, or to know for herself the highest truth, beauty, goodness – and also love – that is the aspiration and domain of the immortal soul. Thus, when Plato equates the logical definition of the Form of a thing with the logical meaning of the linguistic term that represents it, he cannot be referring to *female* things. And when he writes in the *Symposium* (1951) of the 'Love' that, in its highest form, is the cosmic principle that impels and unites human minds in their sublimation of base, physical urges, and the intellectual pursuit of divine wisdom, it is and can only be the homosexual<sup>7</sup> love of and between the minds and bodies of *men* to which he

---

<sup>6</sup> In *Plato and Sex* (2010), Stella Sandford argues that Plato sees sex difference as ontologically equivalent to other differences (e.g. long-haired/short-haired men) and therefore not a primary consideration with regard to the work capacities of men and women. But it is only because he denies a soul to woman, and casts her as a lesser male, that the category of sex then *becomes* unimportant to Plato, as to those after him.

<sup>7</sup> In its ancient Greek context, the term 'homosexual' refers not to the modern identity of a man (or woman) as defined in mutually exclusive and pejorative opposition to the term 'heterosexual', but to the highest form of physical and intellectual love (Eros) seen as possible only between noble men, and that, for Plato, inspires the common philosophical search for the beatific vision of divine wisdom.

is referring. Women, being devoid of an essential soul and rational mind, and thus, of the power to transcend physical desires, are (like animals) capable only of a base, *physically* sexual, procreative form of love, as opposed to the *spiritually* sexual, moral and intellectual procreativity that is possible only through the supreme love and ‘marriage’ of and between the noble minds of men (p. 91). Because he conceives woman as dark, deceptive, soulless, formless matter ruled by uncontrollable appetites and desires, and as therefore undefinable, unknowable, and symbolically unrepresentable, Plato’s metaphysics can by definition only be about the nature of men and all things (wholly or defectively) male. But, if this is the case, then why did he describe the woman *Diotima* as ‘wise’, and especially in matters of higher love? It seems, then, that within Plato’s metaphysical denial of *essence* to woman, and its consequent conception as a purely immaterial, male preserve may lie the seeds of misconception, not only of *essence*, but also of (paradoxical)<sup>8</sup> *woman*; seeds that find fertile ground for germination in the thoughts and works of Aristotle.

### Aristotle

Where the main purpose of Plato’s philosophizing was to argue the possibility of knowledge of absolute goodness, right conduct, and therefore, of man’s ultimately transcendent attainment of happiness, Aristotle believed that happiness came with knowledge and the fullest (material) actualization of one’s essential form and purpose. He therefore adopted the ideas of his teacher Plato, but then modified them to bring the Platonic real world of perfect Forms (and our knowledge of it) into closer relation with the *natural* world of living things. For whilst Aristotle agreed with Plato that things in the real world have a definite *form* that enables humans to achieve a true and lasting knowledge of their essential being, his greater interest and concern was to know what causes physical objects and natural kinds to exist, to persist identically throughout the changes in their existence, and therefore, to be knowable. It was therefore necessary to have a metaphysics (and system of reasoning) that would support the possibility and attainment of knowledge of the immediate, natural world as perceived by the senses. But Plato’s netherworld of eternal, universal forms did not recognize, and so could not account for, any form of persisting, unchanging, and therefore knowable being in the physical, sensible world. For what the Platonic dualistic theory could not explain was: i) how the transcendent, immaterial Forms might cause or otherwise relate to their physical counterparts; and ii)

---

<sup>8</sup> This paradox dissolves as the genealogy unfolds.



how these immutable Forms might account for the phenomena of persisting unity and identity, but also change and motion, that characterize the physical world (Guthrie, p. 128). Aristotle therefore looked *within* - rather than *outside of* - the physical, sensible world for a source of enduringly identical, definite form that would not just confirm the possibility of (and enable) certain knowledge of the nature of worldly things and natural kinds, but more importantly, offer a coherent causal account and definition of their fixed, persisting and identical, but also changeable, motile and adaptable form of being.

Rather than conceiving the real world in terms of transcendent 'Forms' of which physical objects are simply fleeting and imperfect imitations, Aristotle (1994) redefined *reality* as the proximate physical world of living and non-living things, in which body and soul continue to be two separately and differently constituted entities, but in which - contra Plato - these entities are now united as two parts of the one composite (soul/body) being or substance. For Aristotle, it is the soul-like essence of a living thing that provides enduringly whole, same, definable and knowable form and function to its otherwise inert, unlimited, and thus unknowable matter, thereby enabling that thing to be, become and be known and defined as the particular kind of thing that it is. While positing roughly ten different categories of being - "Essence, Quantity, Quality, Relation, Place, Time, Position, State, Activity, Passivity" (*Topics, I, §9*) - it is the category of *essence* that is, for Aristotle, the first principle or cause of, and thus prior to, all the other categories that are predicated of it. For, as he says in *Metaphysics VII* (1994),

Being is said in many ways...for in one way it indicates the "what is it" and an individual, and in others it indicates a quality or a quantity or one of the other things that are predicated as these are. While being is said in all these ways, it is obvious that primary among these is the "what is it," the very thing which indicates the substance. (1028a10-15)

It is the essence that primarily and persistingly shapes and determines the substantial form or "thinghood" (Sachs, 2006, §5) of every living thing, and it is the definition of this essence that therefore constitutes the answer to the question "What is it?" Thus, while the essential nature of a substantial thing may be partly perceived and defined in terms of the variously categorized essential properties predicated of it (e.g. two legs, brown etc.), the essential form (i.e. a man) that unifies, integrates, and motivates its being is seen as separate from, ontologically and epistemically prior to, and always in excess of these properties. The essential form - the "what it is" - precedes any quality or quantity - the

‘how it is’ - that may be predicated of it (Smith, 2000, §7.3). For it is the essential unity (or integrated wholeness) of form of a being that identically persists while accidental properties change, and that ‘holds together’, organizes, and (re)shapes its essential properties (along with their definition) in a determinate and relational way. The essential form of a composite substance therefore enables it to have a unity and integrity of being that, in causing it to persist through time and change, allows it to be perceived, defined and known as a particular individual - an enduringly whole being that stands apart from, and maintains a fixed identity within, its everchanging surroundings (Sachs, 2006, §9).

In saying that the essence of a composite thing is the cause of its persistingly whole, identical, integrated, and definable form of being, Aristotle is not, however, implying a form that is inactive or unchanging. In the same way that a house becomes dilapidated if not actively maintained, so is essential being a process of constant activity; a thing must always actively maintain itself in order to simply *keep on* being the very same thing that it is. The essence of a thing is therefore not only its *first* but also its *efficient* cause - the ‘prime mover’ that impels the maintenance, growth and functional movement of its integrated form. This actively persisting form then becomes the enduring platform for the changes that Aristotle sees as necessarily occurring within a thing, due to the constant competition between opposite and fluidly mutable states of the qualities, quantities or other essential categories of predication (e.g. variations in colour, size and location).

Aristotle’s essence or first principle of being therefore has primarily an active, causal and definitional role, and only secondarily a classificatory role, in the nature and definition of living things. In this way, he maintains Plato’s distinction between the definition of the real, *non-linguistic essence* or form of a living thing, and the definition that signifies the *linguistic meaning* of the term that represents it. However, where Plato sees non-linguistic definitions as referring to perfect, *universal* Forms, Aristotle’s non-linguistic definitions refer to the whole essential form - and also function - of the *individual* being (or composite substance). And his linguistic definitions may be based on this whole form, on (one or more) universal essential properties used to classify species into genera or other *phyla*, or else, on properties defined in relation to the perspective and interests of others, rather than the essential nature of the thing itself (Witt, 1989, p. 36). In the latter case, the linguistic definition of a thing or substance may bear little resemblance to its real essence-based definition. It is this distinction between ontological and linguistic definitions that has

produced the two most common philosophical understandings of essence - as a 'real' or 'biological' essence, and as a 'nominal' or 'linguistic' essence; understandings which have then shaped and informed the discourses of metaphysics and language from Aristotelian times to the present day.

In reconceiving essences as existing within the physical body, rather than in an ethereal otherworld of Forms, Aristotle raises the bodily senses and desires from their lowly, distasteful Platonic status by enabling *physical* sensations to be more closely related to the *psychical* perceptions, intuitions and thought processes of the immanent, rational soul/mind. No longer a hindrance to the attainment of scientific knowledge of the real world, the bodily senses are, for Aristotle, the direct observational means by which sensory information about the nature of other individual beings may be gathered and then, through deductive and inductive reasoning, transformed into universal definitions and principles of essential being. To gain knowledge and understanding of the intrinsic nature of a living thing is therefore a matter of intuitively grasping and then creating a logically structured definition of its *essential* form and function, based on the (repeated) observation of its substantial form and its categorical and self-actualized ways of being, functioning, and relating. It is Aristotle's logical categories and principles of being and predication (such as the laws of 'non-contradiction' and 'excluded middle') that determine what can be validly, truly and universally said or predicated of the essence of a thing (or its species), as the object of scientific observation and knowledge (Smith, 2000).

A further distinctive feature of Aristotle's notion(s) of essence is that, while Plato's *ousia* or essence causes and defines not only an individual but also a universal form of being (for example, the one, transcendent Form of 'beauty' which is also universally predicated of many subjects), traditional interpretations of Aristotle's *ousia* have defined it as only a *universal* or *species* essence (such as the essence of 'man' or 'horse', for example), and not an *individual* essence. As such, its primary function would be to classify and group all organisms sharing a particular essential property into species or other genera. However, Charlotte Witt (1989) disputes this interpretation, arguing that, because he defines essence as the first cause or principle of substantial being, and therefore as prior to the universal properties that are always predicated of and cannot exist separately from (or prior to) that substantial being, Aristotle's essence cannot primarily be a universal property that is predicated of and thus unites and classifies the members of a species. It is, in the first

instance, an essence that causes, unifies, motivates and defines the *individual* as a persistingly same (but also changing) composite substance, and, in doing so, also determines its “species-membership” (p. 175). Further, in response to the argument that Aristotle characterizes definitions as not only statements of essence, but also as being intrinsically shared by more than one individual, and therefore, as definitions of the universal, Witt claims that there is nothing in Aristotle’s theory that precludes an individual definition - such as the definition of the essence of an individual human being - from also being the shared, universal definition of any number of human beings (p. 174).

Whilst there may be contention as to whether Aristotle’s notion of essence is an individual or universal essence<sup>9</sup>, one aspect of his theory that can generally be agreed upon is that a real Aristotelian essence or form *does not* cause, inhabit, or motivate the *female* body. For, as well as adopting Plato’s distinction between the definition of the nature of a non-linguistic item and the definition that is the meaning of the linguistic term representing it, Aristotle adopts and perpetuates the Platonic assumption that essences - be they individual or universal, human or animal - are a *male* preserve. Thus, according to Aristotle, only men have an essential soul/form that causes, determinately unifies, shapes, and thus defines them as human, as men, and as individuals; women are simply the deformed, undeveloped *matter* that provides the nurturing substrate (or matrix) for the planting, germination and actualization of man’s seed, and thus, his essence. For, as he states in *On the Generation of Animals* (1953),

Now a boy is like a woman in form, and the woman is as it were, an impotent male, for it is through a certain incapacity that the female is female...what the male contributes to generation is the form and the efficient cause, while the female contributes the material (§20)...the female is as it were a deformed male. (§25)

Denied a self-subsisting self-motivating soul/essence of her own, woman (like universal properties) cannot have her own, independently defined cause, form or existence. She can therefore exist, be defined, and known only *as* the germinal, material properties or aspects of man’s essential form. Thus, if the transcendent aspect of man’s soul is male, then its (boyish) immanent, material aspect is female. It is on this basis that the term ‘woman’ comes to be defined only in fixed, posterior, inferior, and asymmetrical opposition to the term ‘man’, ‘woman’ representing the passive, submissive material properties of man’s

---

<sup>9</sup> This confusion and apparent contradiction is addressed in Chapter 3.

essential being, and thereby installing 'man' as the sole whole, dominant, active, rational subject. Thus, if 'man' has the (whole) form and identity of 'A', then 'woman' is his '~A'; that is, the defined, controlled, proper 'not A' or 'not-man' that fixedly constitutes the immanent *ousia* of 'A'. If 'man' as 'A' has the (masculine) property of *activity*, for example, then 'woman' as his '~A' represents (feminine) *passivity*. In this way, Aristotelian logic denies woman an independently caused, unified, and self-motivated form of existence that would allow her to be defined and known in and on her own terms (Haslanger, 2007, §4).

Aristotle's denial of a real essence to woman further problematizes Witt's reading of Aristotelian real essences as ontologically primary, and as identical to and defined by the universal. For only if there is no sex-based distinction and characterization of the real causal essence (man) can it be conceived as: i) an indivisible unity that is thus ontologically and epistemically prior and identical to the universal species-essence (human), and ii) causative and definitive only of ontological *sameness*, and not also of sex/individual *difference*. It seems, therefore, that Aristotle's conception of essentially whole, generational form as an immaterial male preserve, and the consequently hierarchical, asymmetrical definition of the ontological natures of man and woman, may be the (logical) source of the misconception of essence that I have hypothesized as underpinning and disrupting Western metaphysics. However, further exploration and discussion of this possibility will be left until Chapter 3, in order to firstly chart the historical and theoretical development of three significant features of essence as it figures in Aristotle's metaphysics. These are - i) the distinction between a 'real', ontologically causal, unifying and determinative essence and definition, and a 'nominal' or classificatory essence and definition which unifies and groups organisms on the basis of shared essential properties; ii) the idea that an essential wholeness and persisting sameness of *form* is a necessary condition for existence, movement and change to (be perceived to) *occur*, and to be *known*; and iii) the idea that truth and knowledge about the essential nature of real, physical beings comes to us via the sense-based, intuitive perception and psychic representation of their essentially whole, universally same form and function. In now turning to the metaphysics of St. Augustine of Hippo, I follow the historical development of these key features of the notion of essence.

## St. Augustine

My form wasted away, and I became corrupt in thy eyes, yet I was still pleasing to my own eyes--and eager to please the eyes of men...Still I did not keep the moderate way of the love of mind to mind - the bright path of friendship. Instead, the mists of passion steamed up out of the pudgy concupiscence of the flesh...and they so obscured and overcast my heart that I was unable to distinguish pure affection from unholy desire. (*Confessions*, Bk 2, Ch I-II)

As a fourth-century medieval Neo-platonist philosopher, and as a Catholic theologian wishing to merge some of the concepts and ideas from Greco-Roman philosophy with those of the Judeo-Christian scriptures, Augustine played a key role in introducing Plato's essentialist metaphysics - as well as the associated sexism - into the biblical scriptures and teachings of the Catholic Church. And the main vehicle for the metaphysical and theological explication of Augustine's version of Platonic essentialism was his interpretation of the Genesis story of Creation and the associated (Pauline) doctrine of 'Original Sin' (Mendelson, 2000).

Like Plato, Augustine was mainly concerned with issues of morality, more particularly, the notions of good and evil, and how mankind might come to know, control and overcome the latter and thus live a good and consequently contented, happy life. He initially turned to the metaphysical beliefs of the Manicheans, who conceived of reality in materialist dualism terms of a dark, physical force of evil with the power to overcome and imprison the good spirit or soul that is composed of particles of light. Disillusioned with this rigorously inadequate view of reality that offered little cause for hope that the force for good might ultimately prevail, Augustine found both rigour and hope in Plato's dualistic view of reality and absolute goodness, and also the Judeo-Christian belief in a perfect, omnipotent, all-knowing, immaterial God who created the universe and mankind to follow His will, and therefore, to be always good, just and purposeful. The appeal of an original, transcendent, intentional and authoritative spiritual being that creates and directs man to do only good led Augustine to give the Christian God priority over Plato's multiplicitous world of Forms and their imperfect material manifestations that must strive for knowledge of divine goodness through the rational contemplation of (firstly physical, but ultimately divine) beauty. For Augustine, it was not enough to think that the powers of *reason* and higher intellect could overcome (and avoid the dangers of) lustful sensual appetites and lead the souls of noble men to divine wisdom and immortality. Because a man can choose to act in

ways that he knows to be either good or bad, to make the choice to transcend one's bodily desires (and especially those for 'forbidden fruit') is, for Augustine, more a case of *will* than of reason. He therefore works to integrate the notions of divine necessity, immutability and immortality so vital to the Platonic conception of a logically fixed knowledge of reality and goodness with the biblical notions of an authoritative God, justice, and divine/human *will*, along with the failing of will that brings the Fall (and possibly the graceful redemption) of the human soul (Mendelson, 2000, §1-5).

In constructing his monotheistic metaphysics, Augustine draws upon *Plato's* dualistic distinction between the metaphysically and morally superior, intelligible soul/mind (or form) and transiently unintelligible sensible body (or matter), and his assertion of an isomorphism between the *ontological* structure of the (intelligible) world, and the *logical* structure of language. But Augustine also draws on *Aristotle's* metaphysics in positing a unitary, thinking God as the ultimate and eternal unity from which all Ideas and living beings originate, and in viewing the immaterial soul and material body as two *integrated* components of that one larger reality. However, where Plato and Aristotle perceive the soul/essence as the ontologically basic, perfect and immutable cause of the persisting form and existence of a living (male) being, for Augustine, it is God - as the origin and creator of human souls - that is the ontologically basic being, and as such, the only being to possess a perfect, immortal, and immutable *essence*. For, while the human soul is potentially immortal, it is also mutable and therefore capable of being transformed by acts of moral goodness or sinfulness. The soul is also conceived as the dominator and ruler of the body, and as having entered the body of its own (sinful) volition rather than, as Plato suggests, being necessarily imprisoned within it until achieving divine wisdom and release from the cycle of reincarnation. Augustine also follows the first century Alexandrian philosopher, Philo, in conceiving the soul as having not only a rational mind, but also a *will* and, as its lower, 'female' aspect, the capacity of *sense perception*. As Genevieve Lloyd explains, it is not a rational or sensory defect, but rather, a weakness of and "loss of control" by the *will* - caused by the mind's tempting (feminine) sense perceptions and unruly, lustful desires - that brings the Fall of man's soul, as recounted in Augustine's account of the doctrine of Original Sin (1984, p. 33).

It is in this part of the *Genesis* account(s) of God's creation of the earth, its plants, animals, and also man that Augustine takes the Platonist and Aristotelian *conceptual* degradation of

the nature of woman - as devoid of soul, ignorant and thus inferior to man - to a *literal*, and thus more damaging, level. For it is a woman in the form of Eve who is first tempted to submit to Satan, then similarly tempting Adam to disobey God's will and taste the forbidden satanic flesh, thereby coming to know both good *and* evil. Because God punishes Adam by thereafter denying him access to the tree of life, it is Eve's sin that causes the fall of Adam's soul from its previous state of divine goodness and immortality to a state of wretched mortality, destined thereafter to be constantly tempted by the senses and tormented with lust for the 'forbidden fruit' that is Satan's phallus.<sup>10</sup> It is 'woman', therefore, who suffers the guilt and shame of bringing sin into the world, a sin thereafter involuntarily transmitted to her offspring through the act of procreation, thereby predestining men's souls to be innately sinful. As Augustine laments, his most grievous sin was that: "I polluted the spring of friendship with the filth of concupiscence and I dimmed its luster with the slime of lust" (*Confessions*, Bk 3, Ch 1). He therefore looks to the baptismal forgiveness and cleansing of original sin, the Eucharistic (re)union with the purifying flesh of Jesus, along with the Platonic pursuit of absolute truth, beauty and goodness, to provide the means by which the souls of men may escape Adam's fall to the (narrowly perceived) physical world of self-rule, sin and mortality. The initial optimism afforded by these redemptive strategies fades in Augustine's later writings, however, as he comes to realize that the universality of original sin dooms the vast majority of humanity - the '*massa damnata*' - to a weakened will that (through its separation from Godliness) is ultimately unable to overcome its loathsome lusts, and therefore destined to make choices that can only ever be more or less sinful (*De Civitate Dei*, 1972, XXI, 12).

What is significant about Augustine's Creation and Fall of Man, is that Eve's sin in disobeying God, tasting the forbidden fruit, and then tempting Adam does not result in her own banishment from God's realm and loss of immortality (of soul), as befalls Adam. Could this be because Augustine, like Plato, Aristotle, and Philo before him, perceives Eve/woman as possessing no soul/essence of her own? Augustine's ontological pronouncement - that only through her relation to Adam can Eve be said to be made in the image of God - suggests this to be the case. The nature of man is Godlike with or without woman, but the nature of woman can be Godlike only through her (appropriated) relation

---

<sup>10</sup> This interpretation of the 'forbidden fruit' as Satan's phallus draws upon the Sanskrit term '*phala*' meaning 'fruit', with the Eucharist representing the divine Phallus (and seed/*Logos*) that restores and immortalizes man's soul (Beattie, 1999); this interpretation consistent with the Sanskrit term '*linga*' meaning 'phallus', 'word', or 'sign'.



to man (Lloyd, 1984, p. 30). Thus, it seems that, through his Creation story, Augustine dualistically conceives and defines Eve/woman as either the good, chastely subdued, material ‘property’ of Adam/man’s soul, or the evil, disobedient, lustful aspect that, in luring him from the (enforming) phallic Word of God to the (deforming) phallic flesh of Satan, brings imperfection and death to that once perfect soul. If this is the case, then, when these philosophers use the terms ‘woman’ and ‘female’, they cannot be referring to an actual, autonomously defined, essential being, but only symbolizing and characterizing the lower physical, sensual and sexual aspects of an *exclusively male* soul; aspects that Augustine sees as practically necessary and useful, but also able to incite lust for depraved and forbidden bodily pleasures, and therefore needing to be wilfully controlled, punished, and subdued.

Hence, when Philo describes the male/female elements of the human soul in allegorical terms of the *Judaic* law that forbids an insubordinate woman from clasping the genitals of her husband’s adversary, saying,

There is in the soul a male and a female element just as there is in families, the male corresponding to the men, the female to the women. The male soul assigns itself to God alone as the Father and Maker of the Universe and the Cause of all things. The female clings to all that is born and perishes; it stretches out its faculties like a hand to catch blindly at what comes in its way, and gives the clasp of friendship to the world of created things with all its numberless changes and transmutations, instead of to the divine order, the immutable, the blessed, the thrice happy (*Special Laws*, 1929, III, XXXII)

it can be only to a man’s soul that he is referring when he symbolizes its lowly, sexually transgressive element as female. For Philo seemingly cautions man against allowing the unruly, sensual, female element of his soul to be drawn to and “take hold of...the [forbidden] symbols of procreation and generation” of another man (ibid.). The notions of woman and female are being utilized here to signify the untrustworthy sensual element or property, both of physical man, and of the God-like soul that can be his alone, and, as such, can have nothing to do with an actual, sexual, female being. Similarly, when Augustine divides the soul into a dominant, rationally contemplative, male force, and an obedient, practically reasonable (but also sexual) female force (Lloyd, p. 29), it can only be the properties of a man’s soul to which he is referring when he oppositionally and subordinately characterizes the reasonably practical - but ultimately fatally seductive - sensual, sexual element of the mortal soul as ‘female’. Hence, as indicated in the

epigraphic allusion to Augustine's friendships with men, it is a man's lust, not for the (given) female, but for the forbidden *male* form that is incited by the submissively feminine, sensual element of his soul, and that, in overpowering the will, inevitably brings the depraved downfall and death of men, and the eternal suffering of their hell-bound souls. For, as 'the love of mind to mind' descends into a state of 'unholy desire', man 'falls' into the formless, fluidly feminized, abyssal realm of unspeakable, uncontrollable, and thus insatiable desires, as

that vision of eternal things is...withdrawn from the [mind's masculine] head himself, eating with his spouse that which was forbidden, so that the light of his eyes is gone from him. (*De Trinitate*, 1887, XII, 8)

The 'female' therefore serves a double purpose in symbolizing not only the lowly sensual aspect of men's souls, but also the state of irredeemable sinfulness and depravity inhabited by all those whose nature it is to be, or who become through weakness of will, devoid of a male-dominated and restrained, God-loving, God-fearing soul.

Thus, where Plato denies actual women an essence, and has woman and the female symbolize the base, physical, sensual body (to be ultimately transcended if spiritual love is to raise men's souls to the higher realm of divine wisdom and immortality), Augustine's philosophical and religious synthesis perpetuates this denial of a female soul/essence, but does so by subjugating and imprisoning the symbolic, sensual 'female' *within* the soul and mind of man. I say 'imprisoning' because, in making Eve/woman the sinful element of Adam/man's soul that fatally lures him to the forbidden pleasures offered by the phallic serpent, Augustine utilized the combined forces of Platonic philosophy and Judeo-Christian scripture to cast real, sexual woman into an abyss of guilt, shame, punishment and oppression so severe that, despite the two thousand years since, she has yet to escape.

### René Descartes

What is sought here is the proper stance for mind to insure the reception of truth and the conception of science. To receive God's truth, the mind must be pure and clean, submissive and open – it must be undefiled and female. Only then can it give birth to a masculine and virile science. That is, if the mind is pure, receptive and submissive – female – in its relation to God, it can be transformed by God into a forceful, potent and virile agent – male – in its relation to nature. (Keller, 1985, p. 38)

Just as Plato had wished to refute Greek skeptics such as Pyrrho and Heraclitus, so seventeenth century French philosopher and mathematician René Descartes set out to refute the medieval skeptics such as Montaigne and Charron who had similarly denied the possibility of true and lasting knowledge of reality. To do so, Descartes (again following Plato) denied the ability of the bodily senses to provide us with true and accurate perceptions of the world, and looked to the powers of the rational mind for the certain truths upon which we may build knowledge of the essential nature of reality. But where Plato based his bid for epistemic certainty on an otherworld of eternal, immutable Forms that could be perceived and known only by the transcendently rational mind, for Descartes it is the intuitional powers of the mind that, in clearly and distinctly perceiving the essence of physical bodies or objects, provide the simple truths from which to rationally deduce more complex truths, and thereby obtain certainty about the physical world (1968, p. 17). Descartes' process of rational deduction of clear and distinct truths also differs from that of Aristotle's syllogistic logic, in that it presupposes mind-perceived ideas of the essence of things as its starting point, where Aristotle's deductive knowledge is based upon abstract concepts of essence that are initially intuitively and inductively derived from bodily sense perceptions. As Descartes says, "we perceive bodies only by the understanding which is in us, and not by the imagination, or the senses...we conceive them in thought" (ibid. p. 112). Thus, if the mind's eye is to perceive clear and distinct ideas, then the Cartesian subject must - like Plato's lovers of wisdom - separate himself and his mind from sensual passions and other bodily sense perceptions, and assume the dominant position of detached, disinterested objectivity. To achieve this position, the mind must submit to and be disciplined by a specific method and its rules of deductive reasoning. It is in order to assist the rational mind of the knowing subject to detach from all external, sensually subjectivizing and thus epistemically disruptive forces and intuitively receive clear and distinct ideas, that Descartes strives to formulate his own mathematically influenced method and principles of reasoning; a single, universally applicable method that he hopes will make certain truths and knowledge of the universe available to all (ibid.).

Descartes wanted the systematically purified intuitive and deductive powers of the mind to provide epistemic certainty, not because he wished to deny the possibility of revealed or otherwise externally authorized truths, but because he wished to democratize knowledge by securing "epistemic authority for individual knowers, who would depend on their own resources and not on the imprimatur of those in high places" (Scheman, 1993, p. 151). His

newly created logical method was designed to stamp all thinking beings with the epistemic authority and means to produce a knowledge of the physical world as objectively accurate and certain as that provided by the abstract truths, principles and methods of mathematics. Humans may not have the infinite nature and infallible knowledge of God, but by disciplining the mind and will to systematically ‘weed out’ and reject all external, uncontrollable and thus untrustworthy (sense) perceptions, we can be certain that the ideas perceived clearly and distinctly are, in fact, true (ibid. p. 152). While Descartes seems, in this way, to obviate the need for revealed truths in the pursuit of certain knowledge, he still, however, relies on God’s existence as a perfect and thus non-deceiving being for the metaphysical guarantee that his method will indeed produce epistemic certainty.

In order to support his claim that certain knowledge of the essential nature of things can be attained via disciplined, objective thought uncontaminated by sensory or sensual input, Descartes developed a dualistic view of reality and its essential nature that distinguishes not between an immaterial essence-based *form* and unbounded *matter*, but between an immaterial, essence-based, rational *mind* and a material, essence-based, mechanical *body*. Thus, where Plato, Aristotle and Augustine saw form and matter as interdependently constituting the human (male) being, with the immaterial form being the first principle or cause of its enduringly unified existence, Descartes conceives mind and body as two distinctly different kinds of substance, each one having (and known by) its own causal essence and/or essential attributes, and thus able to exist independently of the other. Or, as he puts it in *The Sixth Meditation*,

I rightly conclude that my essence consists in this alone, that I am a thinking thing, or a substance whose whole essence or nature consists in thinking. And although perhaps (or rather, as I shall shortly say, certainly,) I have a body to which I am very closely united, nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself in so far as I am only a thinking and un-extended thing, and because, on the other hand I have a distinct idea of the body in so far as it is only an extended thing but which does not think, it is certain that I, that is to say my mind, by which I am what I am, is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it. (1968, p. 156)

For Descartes, mind and body can exist and function autonomously, since each has its own cause or principle of motion: the *soul* is the essence (or formal cause) of - and *thought* the essential attribute of - the mind, while *mechanical operation* is the efficient (not formal) cause of - and *extension* the essential attribute of - the body. And, because each substance

has its own stabilizing and persisting essence (and essential properties), it becomes possible to know and fixedly define the natures of both mind and body.

However, Descartes' main focus is on justifying, enabling and gathering (scientific) knowledge of the natural, material body that he conceives as a kind of automaton that operates in a machine-like manner, determinately organized by the same physical and mathematical laws that govern the entire universe. It is this self-generating mechanical structure that differentiates the autonomous Cartesian body from the soul-dependent Platonic body. For, where Plato relies on a soul (or Form) to persistingly unify, define, and thus enable universal knowledge of the essential nature of living things, Descartes' mechanical essence allows him to deny a unifying soul/form to animal bodies, but still assert the possibility of *a priori* knowledge of their intuitively mind-perceived essential (spatial) properties. Thus, whilst the Cartesian subject may initially perceive the natural body as a (sensibly) unknowable source of "wonder", he is then able to intuitively perceive, know, and define its essence as an aggregate of mechanical parts/properties.

Man, however, is viewed by Descartes as having an immaterial soul (or mind) that is connected to the entire material body - particularly via the brain's *pineal* gland and its 'animal spirits' - so that both substances are able to connect and interact with each other in a way that, because it is contradictory to conceive soul and body as both unified *and* distinct, Descartes says we can experience, but not fully explain (Rodis-Lewis, 1998, p. 206). Thus, while the external senses and passions naturally influence the mind in the course of everyday life, these bodily intrusions can produce distorted and erroneous thoughts when the mind is searching for truth, and therefore in need of the clarity and distinction that pure, detached, objectivity brings. The physical body and its needs and functions are therefore little more than a hindrance to the Cartesian knower, and best left to the care and attention of women (Lloyd, 1999, p. 79). For only through the intuitive and deductive powers of a disciplined, detached intellect may one transcendent Cartesian mind know the essential nature of another, or the essential, extensional properties of the real, naturally unknowable body that the objective observer may subjugate, dissect, opposingly define and control as his object of knowledge.

While Descartes' democratic system of thought and knowledge seems to offer women the same opportunity as men to be its rational, knowing subject (as Augustine also seems to

do), feminist philosophers have argued that the Cartesian account of reason (as a learnt, specialized skill), allied as it is to his mind/body distinction, inadvertently serves to support and perpetuate the sociohistorical and discursive identification of reason and the rational mind with *masculinity*, and the unreasonable, sensual body with *femininity*. As a result, the method that Descartes hoped would bring truth and knowledge to all becomes the preserve of men only. Susan Bordo, for example, interprets Descartes' theory of truth and knowledge (as attainable only through an acquired, 'pure' method of reasoning) as the theoretical result of a psychological "flight from the feminine" (1987, p. 5), in which cultural anxiety caused by modern science's separation of man from nature-as-mother, manifests in Cartesian theory as the rational mind's desire to separate from and control the unruly, impure body that symbolizes (female) nature. For Bordo, then, it is for psycho-cultural reasons that Descartes' concept of *reason* comes to be seen as masculine in nature. Genevieve Lloyd (1984), on the other hand, sees the Cartesian account of reason and knowledge as gender-neutral, but as having been deployed within ontological and epistemological theories to characterize masculinity as abstractly and transcendently rational in opposition to femininity as it is characterized by and symbolizes the (inferior) irrational, sensual, emotional and imaginary processes of the mind (and body).

I would argue, however, that the Cartesian methods and principles are not about the masculinization of reason, but about the submissive, purifying *feminization* of an ultimately male mind that can therefore belong only to man. For the purpose of the Cartesian method is to cleanse the mind of epistemic impurities, and, through detachment from potentially unruly passions, open the mind and render it receptive to the will and Word of the paternal God as the ultimate disseminator of epistemic authority and truth. In this way, Cartesian man's mind enacted what had sociohistorically and philosophically been seen as the role of the pure, proper girl/woman: to submit to the authoritative *will*, and receive and nurture the seed-bound *soul/essence* of man. Thus, where Plato had conceived of man's sensual, sexual *body* as the lowly, imperfect, female aspect of his being, and where Augustine had conceived of man's lustful desires as the inferior female element of his mind, Descartes conceives both mind *and* body as female aspects of man, his methodically disciplined, virginally pure *mind* and sensually uncontrolled, impure *body* reflecting the dual 'good/evil' metaphysical and religious conception of 'woman'. It is therefore not the Cartesian *method* of reasoning that is masculine in nature, nor able to be used to characterize and differentiate masculinity from (irrational) femininity, but the

transcendent mind itself. For only a mind that is potentially or actually male can be temporarily rendered femininely submissive and receptive by the Cartesian method, as an escape from threatening (female) embodiment. And despite his apparent recognition of some limited capacity for reason in women, in saying that “even women”<sup>11</sup> might be able to gain something from his method, Descartes’ failure to address and challenge the Platonic/Aristotelian denial of an essence to ‘woman’ means that the rational mind (or soul) that submissively receives and dominantly disseminates God’s truth can but continue to be a male preserve.

In her essay “Though This Be Method, Yet There Is Madness in It”, Naomi Scheman (1993) views the Cartesian method as expressing and defusing a potential *paranoia* that is not just peculiar to Descartes, but that characterizes - and gives rise to the main theoretical problems within - the whole of modern philosophy. Scheman examines Freud’s analysis of the *paranoia* of (German judge) Daniel Paul Schreber as the homosexual mind’s detachment (or ‘splitting’) from the sensual, passionate body, and the purifying *projection* of repressed, forbidden sexual desires and associated feelings of sinfulness and self-hatred onto that and other bodies in the external world. For Schreber, the external, physical world therefore becomes a hostile, persecutory place in which the paternal “God and his ‘rays’” (Scheman, p. 149) are out to forcibly penetrate his mind and body; a masochistic fantasy that is desired because it signifies paternal (disciplinary) love and the bestowal of phallic privilege, but also anxiously feared in risking the ‘unmanning’ or castrating *feminization* of the male subject. Scheman therefore (re)interprets Schreber’s *paranoia* as arising not from the (Freudian) fear and projection of homosexual desires, but from every man’s fear of being feminized through the (cultivated, then forbidden) desire to submit to another male subject, a potentially paranoid fear that Descartes controls through what Scheman calls his “logic of male homophobia” (p. 150). For, only a mind methodically stripped of its forbidden (real) phallic desires will be pure enough to submit to and unite with God the omnipotent Father, thereby receiving the divine seed of epistemic privilege, authority and truth that guarantees possession and dissemination of certain knowledge (and control) of the physical world. Or as Evelyn Fox Keller puts it:

Cleansed of contamination, the mind can be impregnated by God and, in that act, virilized - made potent and capable of generating virile offspring in its union with nature. (1985, p.38)

---

<sup>11</sup> As quoted from Descartes’ ‘Letter to Vatier’, 22 February 1638, cited in Lloyd (1984, p. 44).

Cartesian dualism, methods and resulting (quantitative, predicative) logic are therefore paths to and guarantors of transcendent male subjectivity, safely distancing modern heterosexual man from his pedagogically constructed, feared, sinful desire for sexual subjugation by *projecting* that fear/desire onto the (deformed, female) physical world of debasedly natural, mechanical bodies, and *controlling* it through the logical/scientific subjugation, dissection, and nominal redefinition of those bodies.

Thus, through his initial bifurcation of the Platonic/Aristotelian notion of a purely immaterial essence/soul, and the attribution of a *formal* essence to man and *effective* material properties to the female object world, Descartes seemingly frees modern man from the taint of natural determinacy, whilst also rendering the physical world objectively perceivable, universally knowable and controllable by him as sole phallically privileged, transcendent subject of language, philosophy and science. But he does so only by ontologically reducing real woman and her female body to a naturally impulsive, potentially (sexually) uncontrollable collection of mechanical parts, her essential nature logically subjugated, defined, controlled and used by modern man as a prophylaxis for his potentially paranoid fear of feminization.

### John Locke

The reason why men enter into society, is the preservation of their property; and the end why they chuse and authorize a legislative is, that there may be laws made, and rules set, as guards and fences to the properties of all the members of the society. (*Two Treatises*, 1980, Bk. 2, §222)

Although English philosopher John Locke agreed with Descartes' dualistic view of reality as composed of immaterial mind and mechanical body, he rejected the Cartesian assumption that, by transcending the senses, the rational mind of man may intuitively perceive and deduce essential truths and certain knowledge of the nature of things. As an empiricist philosopher, Locke believed that, although the mind of man has an innate capacity for reason, it has no innate ideas. Rather, ideas and knowledge come entirely from the (mind's) sense perception or experience of the qualities of physical objects, followed by conscious reflection on those simple ideas, thereby producing complex ideas that define their nature. And while Locke followed Descartes in viewing mind and body as separate substances, with each having its own self-subsisting, self-motivating essence or essential



properties, his mechanical model of physical bodies differed from Descartes' in conceiving matter not as infinitely divisible, but as composed of individual atoms and corpuscles, the microstructural organization of which is the "real *Essence*" (1975, p. 418) of the body. This atomically-constituted microstructural essence is, for Locke, the causal basis of a thing's macroscopic *primary* qualities (of extension, solidity, shape and motion, for example), and these essential atoms and corpuscles - through their properties of solidity and motion, and their impact on the sense organs - have the powers to produce *secondary* qualities (e.g. colour, smell and taste) in the *passively receptive* mind of the observer. But while these primary qualities and powers may impress themselves on our senses, thereby producing simple ideas of them in our minds, the real essence (that is their cause) is unable to be directly perceived or known by the mind, due firstly to the insensible nature of essence, and secondly to our inability to explain how (insensible, material) states of atomic bodies might cause the (immaterial) states of mind that are their secondary qualities. For, as Locke writes in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1975),

These mechanical Affections of Bodies, having no affinity at all with those *Ideas*, they produce in us, (there being no conceivable connexion between any impulse of any sort of Body, and any perception of a Colour, or Smell, which we find in our Minds) we can have no distinct knowledge of such Operations beyond our Experience; and can reason no otherwise about them, than as effects produced by the appointment of an infinitely Wise Agent, which perfectly surpass our Comprehensions. (Bk. IV, iii, §28)

The nature of the real essence and the operation of its atomic/corpuscular particles being so far beyond man's perception and comprehension, only God can be the cause and thus have divine knowledge of the real essence of things, and the way it operates to allow the properties of material bodies to become ideas in the immaterial mind of man.

However, through its passive perception and formation of *simple ideas* of a thing's primary and secondary properties, the mind is then - through active reflection and association - able to construct a complex idea of the nature of the thing perceived; this idea being the *nominal essence* of the object. The nominal essence (or form) is therefore the sum total of the mind's perceptions and ideas of the primary and secondary properties of a thing, and thus provides the definition of the object, as well as identifying it, along with other like objects, as belonging to a particular species. But because it is only a nominal form of essence - based primarily on *secondary* properties that are not resemblances of properties in the perceived object - that forms the basis for our knowledge of natural things (their real

essence being insensible and thus unknowable), Locke concludes that we can only ever have a *limited* rather than a *certain* knowledge and understanding of the essential nature of natural phenomena (1975, Bk IV, iii, §6).

It is for this reason that Locke criticizes and denies the credibility of an Aristotelian metaphysics and epistemology that assume the real, individual essence of a natural kind to be knowable and definable, and that therefore use the whole form and properties of this essence not only to individually *explain* “the very being of any thing, whereby it is, what it is” (1975, p. 417), but also to universally *identify* and *classify* things appearing to share that form into species and genera. For, Locke argues, if we cannot perceive the atomic essence of a thing, then how can we even *claim* to be able to group, scientifically classify, and universally define those things perceived to share the same essential form? Locke’s epistemic solution, then, says that, while we may be unable to know and use the ‘real’ essence of things as the basis for scientific knowledge and explanation of natural phenomena, we can use the abstract general *idea* – the ‘nominal’, mind-constructed essence – of a thing to identify, group, classify and name physically same things as particular species and genera. In this way, the complex ideas that man’s mind creates from its simple ideas of the qualities of individual things or ‘substances’, and to which it then adds the appropriate *names* such as “*Man, Horse, Sun, Water, Iron*” (ibid. p. 298), provide the conceptual basis for the scientific classification and necessarily limited knowledge, definition and differentiation of the nature of various species and other natural kinds. And whilst both Aristotle and Descartes base the identity of an individual man on his enduringly formed rational soul/mind, Locke attaches man’s personal and species identity to neither soul nor body, but to the persisting, remembering (*self-consciousness*) that accompanies the thinking spirit of man; a consciousness that, being grounded in spirit/soul, is therefore not shared by animals or other purely material creatures.

In refuting Aristotle’s notion of a real, knowable, soul-like essence that determines and motivates the form and function of natural beings, and Descartes’ claim to certain, intuitively perceived knowledge of the essential properties of physical bodies, Locke’s understanding of essence maintains and perpetuates their denial of an immaterial essence to woman, and her reduction to a (male-defined) collection of material properties. For, it is only through their denial of a specifically female (immaterial) essence that either the Aristotelian real essence of an individual man, or the Lockean abstract, nominally essential

Idea of an individual man, might be universalized to serve as the essence that classifies and defines the entire human species as it is identified by the name 'Man', and as it is ranked with but also differentiated from the species 'Horse', for example. Locke makes this point very clearly when he says,

Now, since nothing can be a *Man*, or have a right to the name *Man*, but what has a conformity to the abstract *Idea* the name *Man* stands for; nor any thing be a Man, or have a right to be of the Species *Man*, but what has the Essence of that Species, it follows, that the abstract *Idea*, for which the name stands, and the Essence of the Species, is one and the same. (1975, p. 415)

Thus, by denying a female essence, the nominal essence and the real individual/species essence of Man, can be seen as one and the same. It is similarly only through this denial of sexual difference that Locke's complex idea of the consciously thinking, willing *spirit* of an *individual* man might serve as the nominal essence that identifies the spirit of the *species* 'Man', and thereby serve to differentiate the inspirited species 'Man' from non-inspired, brutish, mechanical animals such as 'Horse' (ibid.).

Thus, despite Locke, in his *Two Treatises of Civil Government*, attributing a measure of rational and social equality to women - an attribution viewed by Andrea Nye (2004) as being based on political expediency rather than feminist perspective - both his notion of a nominal *essence* that is the meaning of a (natural kind) term and his notion of a consciously rational, propertied subject or *self* assume an identity or sameness that can only be singularly *male*, and that therefore necessarily excludes woman and all things female. For, according to Locke, man as a citizen is, according to natural law, a free, autonomous and self-interested individual whose natural right it is to inherit, accumulate and protect private property or wealth, while woman and child are, by nature, subservient to the "rule" and will of that man as the head of the family and household that is his private property (1980, Bk. 2, §82). But, as Nye argues, man cannot be the autonomous agent that Locke paints him to be, when his very position and wealth as citizen and property owner necessarily depend on woman's subordinate and unpaid role (and labour) as wife and mother; that is, *as his property*. It is for this reason that Nye declares,

Locke's modern individuals, the individuals who are to be the property owners and the citizens in the new modern states, have to be men. They have to be men because they are all the same; it is their very separation from the different world of women and the family that makes them individuals and the same. (2004, p. 57)

It seems, therefore, that whether literally or conceptually, Locke perpetuates the denial of a unifying immaterial essence to woman, and thus, following Descartes, conceives her (like animals) as a collection of material, mechanical properties defined by and in relation to man as sole conscious subject. However, because Lockean knowledge of physical bodies is now based on secondary (sense) qualities caused by those bodies, but existing in and synthesized by the mind of the observing male subject, epistemic authority in the construction and definition of woman's nominally essential, universal properties now sits squarely with him. Thus, with her real essential nature now seemingly unknowable, Locke reduces woman to an object of man's reflection.

### **Immanuel Kant**

Kant excludes women from the category of persons or individuals. Women can only be property. (Pateman, 1988, p. 171)

By the time Immanuel Kant began his major works, both rationalist and empiricist philosophers had failed to provide sound metaphysical and epistemological arguments for the possibility (and the limits) of certain and lasting knowledge of reality. For while a rationalist perspective could theoretically provide indubitable *a priori* knowledge of universal, immaterial forms or ideas beyond transient, particularized sense experience, it could say little with certainty about the nature of the sensible, physical world of everyday experience. An empiricist perspective, on the other hand, might justify and enable knowledge of the immediately observable, particular, physical world, but - because of David Hume's denial of the (observable) existence of natural causality or necessary connections, and thus, the validity of induction of universal truths - could not account for or provide certain knowledge of universal scientific principles and truths, or, therefore, claim to make accurate predictions about future events (Stumpf, 1993, p. 301).

Meanwhile, Newtonian physics had enabled scientists to begin unravelling and explaining the nature of the physical, mechanically determined universe using precisely the notions of causality and inductive inference that Hume had discredited. This scientific knowledge presented a further problem for Kant, in that a scientific method that sought to explain reality - including human behaviour - in natural, mechanical and deterministic terms, could

not then accommodate the notions of free will and of an authoritative, intentional God that had infused traditional theories of metaphysics and morality (ibid.). Therefore, in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929), Kant worked to bridge the gap between rationalism and empiricism, and synthesize a metaphysical and epistemological model of reality that would fit with the deterministic Newtonian science of his day, but also recognize an immaterial God, a subjective self, free will, and universal moral principles, in its account of human nature and behaviour. Doing this required the obviation of empirical induction of *universal* truths from sense experience, and of rationalist claims to *a priori* knowledge of *metaphysical* realities (such as the existence of God) despite an inability to define real, sensible, experiential objects. Kant therefore fashioned a new approach to metaphysics and epistemology, which he called *critical philosophy*.

Like Descartes and Locke, Kant viewed mind and body as two different substances: the rational mind an essential part of man's soul, the sensible body composed of organized and fundamentally intelligible matter. Thus, to Kant, the mind of a thinking being was purely an "object of inner sense", while the body was "an object of outer sense" (1929, A357). But where Descartes asserted the possibility of man receiving essential truths and certain knowledge of (material and immaterial) reality through intuitive and deductive reasoning, and Locke asserted that all knowledge comes from sensory experience, Kant agreed that knowledge *begins* with experience, but added: "it does not follow that it all arises out of experience" (ibid. B1). For Kant, (outer) sense perception was not a matter of physical objects actively impressing themselves upon the passively receptive human senses (as Locke and Descartes had thought), but rather, a subjectively controlled process in which outer objects exist and are perceived - and then phenomenally and synthetically defined and known - only if they fit with the perceiving mind's *innate* faculty of intuition, and its various *a priori* laws, concepts and categories of rational understanding and judgement. As he puts it,

If intuition must conform to the constitution of the objects, I do not see how we could know anything of the latter *a priori*; but if the object (as object of the senses) must conform to the constitution of our faculty of intuition, I have no difficulty in conceiving such a possibility...For experience is itself a species of knowledge which involves understanding; and understanding has rules which I must presuppose as being in me prior to objects being given to me...They find expression in *a priori* concepts to which all objects of experience necessarily conform. (1929, B xvii)

Kant posits twelve *a priori* categories of the understanding that roughly correspond to Aristotle's categories of essential being. He then reconceives and regroups these (ontological) categories under the four innate forms or concepts of judgement (i.e. quality, quantity, relation and modality) by which the mind perceives, spatiotemporally synthesizes as phenomenal objects, and thus constructs *a priori* knowledge of (the apparent form of), external objects (Thomasson, 2009, §1.2).<sup>12</sup> Thus, man's essential, universal knowledge of physical bodies comes not from his intuitive perception of their (immaterial) essence or form of being (as Aristotle thought), but from the ways in which sensible objects perceptually fit with, and are synthesized, defined, and classified by, the logical laws, concepts and categories of the active, conscious mind (Brook, 2008, §3.2). It is on the basis of the innate existence of these *a priori* laws and categories that Kant asserts the possibility of synthetic *a priori* judgements and propositions that permit *experiential* but also *universal* knowledge of the world - not as it essentially is 'in itself', but as it perceptually or phenomenally *appears*. For, these Kantian categories give a persistingly unified, defined, identical, and thus classifiable *form* to the physical body that Descartes and Locke saw as a bundle of mechanical properties, thereby acknowledging the Aristotelian requirement of a persistingly whole, same form for the existence and knowledge of physical beings. But for Kant, this form is purely apparent. That is, it is a *representation* of an external object, and the epistemic authority and means to knowledge of its nature now lie, not outside, but *within* the conscious rational *subject* who, in synthesizing an undifferentiated mass of sense data into whole, essentially enformed appearances, may not perceive or know the underlying essence or "substratum" of a *noumenal* object "in itself" (1929, p. 339), but can have reliable experiential, but also universal knowledge of these *phenomenal* objects, and all of their kind. While Kant therefore recognizes the existence of real, essence-based things in themselves, definition and knowledge of these things can only be of their apparent or *nominal* essence as perceived, synthesized, and understood by the transcendent rational mind of man. It is on this basis that Kant surmises that the essence or soul of "a thinking being in itself" may or may not be different from the "intelligible" substratum underlying its apparent, extended, material body (ibid. A360).

In thus denying knowledge of the essential nature of things in themselves, and of the existence of (noumenal) metaphysical entities such as the 'self', the 'cosmos', and 'God',

---

<sup>12</sup>The concept of *quality*, for example, contains and implies the (ontological) categories of 'reality', 'negation' and 'limitation' as they function in the logical synthesis, organization and knowledge of phenomenal objects.

Kant nevertheless views the latter entities as “transcendental ideas” (ibid. p. 315) or pure concepts necessarily created by pure reason to give an enduring coherence and systematic unity to the various (inner) psychological sensations and processes, and various (outer) physical events and causal connections. Not referring to any real experiences, these transcendental *ideas* are implied by and enable metaphysical completion of the theory of things in themselves persistently existing (beyond appearances) as systematically unified beings. With no real, immortal Platonic/Aristotelian soul (or Lockean microstructural essence) to posit, perceive, or know as the first cause and prime mover of physical beings, Kant’s idea of a perfect, immortal, self-subsisting *God* underwrites the persistingly whole, unified existence and nature of noumenal bodies, and, therefore, the correspondingly ordered unity (and thus, knowledge) of their phenomenal representations. And, while a real, soul-based *self* cannot be empirically known to exist, the transcendental idea of this self arises from the perception of wholly and persistingly existing phenomenal objects, including one’s (apparent) self. This idea then implies and necessarily underwrites the persisting, unified existence of a rational - and therefore free-willed, moral - *subject* who, in imposing logical categories of the understanding onto jumbled sense data, makes possible the known, defined, controlled existence of otherwise naturally aggressive, potentially transgressive, sensual, desiring bodies - including his own. Kantian acts of virtue are therefore those dutifully performed by this rational subject in accordance with universally acceptable moral principles, and that require his wilful, reasoned *restraint* of aggressive, immoral desires and inclinations, so that the existence, status and (property) rights of all moral agents be respected and maintained, and perfect goodness (*summum bonum*) and immortality be ultimately achieved (Kheel, 1993).

Apart from having the (free) will and innate means to subordinate personal interests/desires to those of the moral and therefore ‘civilized’ community, the other thing that uniquely characterizes Kant’s rational, moral self is its singular maleness. For, as feminist philosophers such as Pateman (1989), Herman (1993) and Kheel (1993) have widely noted, the Kantian unified self is a moral agent (or member) firstly, because he is rational, and secondly, because he owns property, and is therefore entitled to engage in binding agreements with other proprietary agents. But because Kant denies women the same higher capacity for reason that he grants to men, seeing the former as ruled by their bodily senses, inclinations and appetites, he therefore denies women metaphysical status as rational, free-willed, moral agents and active, propertied citizens. Thus, while Kant does grant woman a

mind of her own, it is devoid of higher reason, strength of will, and awareness of the sublime, and so, driven by the senses, must act in obedience to the will of man. As Kant explains in *Of the Beautiful and Sublime* (1960), “[Woman’s] philosophy is not to reason, but to sense” (p. 79), and she can therefore attain a measure of moral and civil standing only as the wife of the male subject;

In matrimonial life the united pair should, as it were, constitute a single moral person, which is animated and governed by the understanding of the man and the taste of the wife. For not only can one credit more insight founded on experience to the former, and more freedom and accuracy in sensation to the latter; but also, the more sublime a disposition is, the more inclined it is to place the greatest purpose of its exertions in the contentment of a beloved object. (ibid. p. 95-96)

Because (beautiful) woman does not possess (sublime) man’s faculty of the understanding, she cannot be said to possess the *a priori* categories that are the precondition for the mind’s synthesis, judgement and knowledge of the phenomenal forms of things in themselves. Thus, whilst she may have knowledge of the senses, the higher, logic-based knowledge of the forms and properties of phenomenal minds and bodies is reserved for man alone. In this way, Kant denies women the epistemic authority and means to construct, define and know, not only themselves as perceiving subjects, but also their own phenomenal objects.

Thus, as the Kantian (male) subject gains a logical mastery and control over the outer object world that the Cartesian subject could only have dreamt of, woman, as man’s logically defined physical and conceptual property, is reduced to his purely and fixedly defined, known object of appearance. Unappropriated, however, she remains unseen and unknowable within the realm of sensually (and disdainfully) unrestrained, natural ‘bodies in themselves’. Within Kant’s metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, then, the transcendently ideal, unified ‘man-in-himself’ becomes the sole creator, knower and (moral) owner of his essentially defined phenomenal objects. As one of those objects, ‘woman’ can exist within the Kantian moral community only as a depersonalized, (literally and conceptually) objectified ‘means’ - never an ‘end’. On this basis, Kant’s categorical imperative to “Act so that you use humanity, as much in your own person as in the person of every other, always at the same time as end and never merely as means” (2002, p. 46), cannot have been addressed or referring to women. It can, therefore, only be an imperative that men not treat themselves or other men as mere ‘means’, or in other words, as passive (female) objects.



Seen in this light, Kant's (1991) efforts to rethink marriage in terms that avoid the disgustingly depersonalizing objectification he sees as an inevitable consequence of existing forms of sexual activity concern the moral standing of the husband, not his wife. For only as the ruler in a sacred union that abstains from non-procreative sex, and in which woman's naturally seductive sexuality submits to and obeys man's rational will, might the male subject be protected from his own immoral passions, and thus be seen and judged by others as a morally self-restrained and honourable subject (Nye, 2004). Hence, the only *immoral* sexual activity can be that which reduces a man or 'end' to a sexually objectified 'means'. Or, in other words, that perceives and treats a man like a woman. Could it be, then, that Kant's reduction of real bodies to male-perceived, essentially synthesized, defined, known, and controlled appearances - thereby further separating the sublimely transcendent subject from the perceptually veiled world of real sexual female bodies - is simply a more acute expression of Cartesian man's fear of feminization? If so, then his addition of a logically fixed, unified, definable form to Locke's nominal essence may simply be a further amelioration of that fear.

### **Edmund Husserl**

[T]he phenomenology of the perception of spatial things is not a doctrine about external perceptions that either factually occur or empirically can be expected; rather, it sets forth the necessary system of structures without which it is not possible to think a synthesis of manifold perceptions as perceptions of one and the same thing. (*Phenomenology*, 1927, p. 17)

Despite seeming to offer the metaphysical and epistemological means to experientially derived, logically defined and generalized knowledge of the phenomenal world, Kant's theory was discredited when it was realized that his rational, free-willed, moral subject and creator of phenomenal knowledge must have at least some knowledge of the noumenal world of things-in-themselves in order to assert that such a world even exists (Philipse, 1995, p. 271). And, if we can know that things-in-themselves exists, then why can't we also know other features of their supposedly unknowable nature? Further, Kant's assertion that phenomenal objects are 'representations' constructed from sensible data received as the affects of things in themselves on the body's sense organs meant that the supposedly transcendent subject could not, therefore, be viewed as existing above and beyond the

external physical world, and might even be simply a manifestation of and dependent upon it. Edmund Husserl therefore criticized Kant for implicitly presupposing a real, external world *an sich* (in itself) to which the conscious, constituting subject belongs, but cannot know (1970, §28). For these reasons, Kant's assertion that the natural sciences could only study and limitedly know the 'phenomenal' and not the 'real' world went unheeded, and scientists continued to inductively extract seemingly certain knowledge from a natural world assumed to be real, despite having no philosophical justification for that assumption. In its success, however, scientific discourse was threatening the very existence of the metaphysical subject, with its claims to be able to explain both conscious mind and physical body in purely physical terms. For if this was the case, then the immaterial soul or spirit of man - seen by Plato and Aristotle as the first cause, form and motivator of his being, and the source of logical definition and knowledge of the material (female) world - could not only become irrelevant to the quest to know that world, but perhaps even be subsumed by it. For Husserl, this meant the unthinkable: the omnipotent Cartesian subject might be absorbed into the very world of physical laws, objects and sciences that he had transcended, mechanized, and controlled, because his primacy had not been recognized and preserved within an independent, self-defining "science of the spirit" (1935, §8). It was therefore this absence of a universal science of the spirit - and its consciousness - that Husserl identified as the cause of a loss of philosophical direction and purpose, and thus, a state of crisis and distress, within modern European culture.

His project, therefore, was to create the conditions for a philosophical science of the *spirit* that would be totally separate from the physical sciences, and that would revive and radically reinstate the Cartesian rational, thinking self or conscious ego as the sole source of (and justification for) truth and knowledge - not of external physical objects, but of phenomenal objects that the conscious subject creates for and by himself. Husserl therefore worked to bring elements of Cartesian rationalism together with aspects of Kantian phenomenal subjectivity, constructing what he called the science of *transcendental phenomenology*. The epistemological aim was to present the ontological grounds and the phenomenological method by which the conscious self might justify and generate universal knowledge of the phenomenal world from his own lived experience. While Husserl begins his science of the spirit with the Cartesian assumption of the knowable existence of a self-conscious, rational subject, he rejects Descartes' *dualistic* reconception of reality as two ontologically separate, independently constituted, and self-motivated substances, a

reconception that he saw as having caused the demise of (Platonic) rationalism and thus the crisis within modern philosophy and culture.

Husserl bases his transcendental phenomenology on a *monistic* view of human subjectivity and its reality as being founded upon, and constituted, perceived, and known by one essential substance: *consciousness*. Hence, his first principle of existence and knowledge is the consciously thinking, experiencing subject who can be sure of his existence because he experiences himself, not as a disembodied ego ‘that thinks’, but as an actively embodied ego that is always constructing and constituting phenomenal objects, and therefore always thinking or intending *something*. Thus, for Husserl, the essential attribute of consciousness is its intentionality, the conscious subject always intending (i.e. sensing, desiring, willing, acting etc.), and thus giving his own subjective meanings to, the objects he constructs (*Ideas I*). In this way, Husserl’s conception of the intentional subject draws upon Kant’s notion of the transcendently conscious, knowing subject that categorically constitutes - and can therefore know - his own phenomenal world. However, in doing so, he rejects Kant’s notion of the transcendent thing-in-itself as an externally existing, but unknowable object. For, in Husserl’s eyes, both Descartes and Kant erred in tying the conscious subject to an external, objective reality with its own essential nature, thereby creating a further need to justify the possibility of knowledge of the existence of a real world external to subjective phenomenal experience. Husserl’s main concern, therefore, is to establish an absolute and indubitable foundation for knowledge, something he sees as achievable only if the reality of the conscious subject or ego is limited to a *phenomenal* reality that the subject himself logically creates, experiences, and thus, knows. His method, then, for establishing this absolute foundation for knowledge, is to firstly perform a phenomenological *epoché* – a reductive procedure in which, examining his intentional thoughts, he then proceeds to separate out and “bracket” (1931, p. 108) all object-directed (or noematic) aspects of those thoughts, thereby suspending all metaphysical assumptions and judgements as to the existence (or not) of an external, object world.<sup>13</sup> In this way, Husserl avoids the ‘natural’ scientific attitude that assumes the (foundational) existence of the physical world, as well as seemingly avoiding the Cartesian and Kantian mistake of tying the existence of the conscious, knowing subject to an external reality (Intro. to

---

<sup>13</sup> Herman Philipse (1995) describes Husserl’s ‘*epoché*’ or ‘bracketing’ of all assumptions and judgements about the existence and nature of the external, object world as being “akin to Cartesian doubt” (p. 240). Only by conceptually bracketing off the sensible (female) aspects of mind and body can certain knowledge of the existence and nature of Descartes’ *rational* or Husserl’s *conscious* subject be justified and attained.

Husserl, 1964). For, what remains of that intentional thought, once its object-directed aspects are bracketed, is the pure *transcendental consciousness* of the intentional “I” that is the active, self-conscious subject, creator and knower of his own ideal world of objective facts, (whole) essences, and meanings. His certainty of the prior, independent, essence-based existence of this pure, conscious ego, along with its ability to intuitively know the essences of intentional (animate or inanimate) things or *noemata*, seemingly presents Husserl with the rational justification and foundation for experience-based - but also universal - knowledge of phenomenal reality as constituted by that subjective ego.

From the premise that consciousness is the base reality that gives rise to an ‘ideal’ life-world of subjectively constituted phenomena, Husserl proceeds to construct his theory of *transcendental idealism*, described in *Ideas I* as a “reversal” (§50) of the naturalist ontology that situates the physical as the foundational principle of all being. Husserl’s theory presents an ontology of consciousness, describing it as a continuous, unified stream of sensations, perceptions of intended objects, and motivating intentions (such as beliefs, desires, judgements or actions) as subjectively experienced and known by the ego. While ‘consciousness’ is conceived as an ontological unity with its own essence, it also gives rise to and co-exists with the regions of ‘matter’ and ‘spirit’, each with their own essence, and all involved in the constitution of living beings. Hence, each living (human) being may be conceptually divided into a plurality of ‘abstracta’ or *essential attributes* which Husserl identifies as: the ‘physical body’, the ‘living (ensouled) body’, the ‘spirit’ (social aspect), and the pure or transcendental ‘ego’ or ‘I’ that is the subject/creator of his own phenomenal “life-world” (1970, §§62-67). Each of these attributes is a perfect instance or “exemplar” (1997, p. 93) of its own species essence, as these essences are instantiated in every conscious *human* individual, with each attribute depending on those below it (e.g. ‘living’ depends upon ‘physical’ body). While animals and other infrahuman creatures are denied (human) spirit and consciousness, they nevertheless wholly and irreducibly exist and are defined and known as a sensing, thinking body inseparable from its soul. This Husserlian model of human/animal existence therefore rejects the Cartesian view of the living body as a collection of mechanical, material properties, taking the Aristotelian view of *real* beings as wholly integrated soul/body composites and applying it, in a pluralized form, to *phenomenal* objects as the basis for their logical constitution, perception, and knowledge by the self-conscious, transcendental subject.

Thus, as the focus of intentional acts of thinking, believing, judging and desiring, phenomenal (living) bodies are consciously constituted from *raw sensations* as essentially whole, substantial beings, existing, motivated and defined according to Aristotle's laws and categories of being (e.g. form, quality, quantity, relation, etc.). As such, contra Kant, Husserl's phenomenal objects do not *represent* any 'external' world of objects in themselves. For Husserl extracts Kant's essential but unknowable 'thing in itself' from the external world, and relocates it within the phenomenal world as the (essentially unified) intentional correlate of a cumulative process of complete and adequate perception. The thing in itself is (and can be logically known as) the "ideal limit" of the phenomenal object, its essential form known in the moment when the object is "wholly and fully given" to the perceiving subject (Philipse, 1995, p. 274). Although these phenomenal objects are constituted by and within the conscious mind, they are nevertheless perceived as existing outside of - and thus transcending - that mind. Herman Philipse (1995) accounts for this subjective externalization of phenomenal objects using the "theory of projection" (popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century) which hypothesizes that, in grouping and ordering sensations as a particular object, the conscious subject *projects* the object to a place outside of his own locality, the object thereby assuming the illusory appearance of an independent, transcendent existence (p. 266). The conscious subject then perceives and comes to know the nature of these projected objects via three modes of *intuitive perception*: i) their factual nature is perceived gradually via "empirical intuition" (sensory perception); ii) their essential nature is perceived in an instant via "eidetic intuition"; and iii) the way objects are intentionally given in experience is perceived via conscious reflection on that experience by the pure "I" or "ego" (*Ideas*, 1931, §3). It is in perceiving the essential form of a human or animal *exemplar* that the conscious subject is able to know the universal essence of its species/kind.

By reconceiving essences and their perception in this pluralized and hierarchical way, Husserl seemingly provides strong ontological argument against attempts by the physical sciences and materialist philosophy to reductively know and define the conscious (human) mind in terms of the physical body. For his monistic view of (structured) reality not only does away with Cartesian mind/body dualism, but also separately and uniquely characterizes the various essences of phenomenal things in themselves so that no one (physical, spiritual or conscious) essence may be known or defined in terms of another. However, in rejecting Cartesian dualism, it appears that Husserl perpetuates another kind

of metaphysical dualism through his science of consciousness. For, where the essences of body, soul, and spirit may be found in all phenomenal beings, pure, essence-based consciousness, as the sole knowable reality, exists prior to and independently of the objects intended, constituted and projected by it. Or, as Husserl says in *Ideas* (1931),

*no real thing...is necessary for the Being of consciousness itself* (in the widest sense of the stream of experience).

*Immanent Being is therefore without doubt absolute in this sense, that in principle nulla 're' indiget ad existendum* [it needs nothing else to exist].

*On the other hand, the world of the transcendent "res" is related unreservedly to consciousness, not indeed to logical conceptions, but to what is actual.* (§49)

But this pure, subjective consciousness - the pure "I" or "ego" that pre-exists, synthetically creates and intuitively knows the essential nature of the phenomenal life-world - is not simply and solely *human*, as Husserl theorizes. It is also, as he reveals, solely *male*:

[The] transcendental subjectivity which for want of language we can only call again, "I myself", "We ourselves", cannot be found under the attitude of psychological or natural science, being no part at all of the objective world, but that subjective Conscious life itself, wherein the world and all its content is made for "us", for "me". We that are, indeed, men, spiritual and bodily, existing in the world, are therefore, "appearances" unto ourselves, parcel of what "we" have constituted, pieces of the significance "we" have made. The "I" and the "we", which we apprehend, presuppose the hidden "I" and "We" to whom they are "present". (*Phenomenology*, 1997, p. 189)

Thus, the supposedly monistic, purely immaterial consciousness actually resides in a male body. And, since the conscious subject's empathetic recognition and knowledge of other similarly conscious subjects depends on recognition of a shared physical, psychological (and therefore conscious) *sameness*, the bodies of those subjects must all be male in order for this epistemology of consciousness to cohere. Hence, as with Aristotle's notion of an originary soul/essence, Husserl's pure consciousness presumes and depends upon male sameness - both between individuals and between the individual and the universal - and therefore cannot recognize (sexuate) difference within conscious, embodied subjectivity without fatally undermining its own foundations.

And so, although Husserl grants to woman an essentially unified form and existence, it is only as an *appearance* constructed within, and as the logically (and opposingly) defined property of, the conscious male mind. By then bracketing off and dis-qualifying any form of defined external/real existence, Husserl relegates real, natural woman to formless non-

existence, thereby imprisoning fabricated ‘woman’ within man’s phenomenal life-world, and re-presenting her essentially unified *appearance* as her reality; a reality known in the moment that she is ‘bodily given’ to the male subject. Small wonder, then, that Theodor Adorno describes Husserl as preferring “puppets” to real women (1982, p. 219), the fate of these mind-bound, controlled objects of male consciousness revealed in Husserl’s words:

Consciousness, considered in its “purity”, must be reckoned as *a self-contained system of Being*, as a system of *Absolute Being*, into which nothing can penetrate, and from which nothing can escape; which has no spatio-temporal exterior, and can be inside no spatio-temporal system. (*Ideas I*, §49)

But if consciousness is self-contained and has no spatio-temporally defined exterior, then what the conscious, knowing subject cannot explain is the source or cause of the constant stream of *bodily sensations* from which phenomenal objects are constituted. In bracketing all questions as to the existence (or not) of an external world, but still acknowledging bodily sensations and sense-data as the base *matter* from which phenomenal objects are essentially formed, Husserl is left with no alternative but - like Locke and Berkeley - to assume “the existence of a “divine” Being beyond the world” (ibid. §58) as the first cause of these sensations. In Husserl’s hands, then, the conscious (male) subject of Cartesian and Kantian theory seems to become even more solipsistically isolated and self-absorbed in the creation, definition and control of his own world of essentially whole, and thus, fully knowable objects. For Husserl’s conscious subjects - the “I” and “we” - are now hiding behind their own impenetrable, logically defined world of seemingly real ‘appearances’, in a further bid, perhaps, to escape the seemingly inescapable ‘unlawful’ sensations, passions and desires of their own real sexual bodies.

### **Saul Kripke**

The idea that philosophy should be relevant to life is a modern idea. A lot of philosophy does not have relevance to life...The intention of philosophy was never to be relevant to life. (Kripke interview with Saugstad, 2001)

As an analytic philosopher wishing to establish a sound metaphysical basis and justification for truth and knowledge about the real physical world, Saul Kripke (1981) rejects the empiricist/subjective idealist view that we initially perceive physical objects as bundles of properties or sense data then synthesized, nominally defined and only

phenomenally known by the mind as complex objects, thereby countering idealist doubt as to the existence of external objects. He does this by taking the Aristotelian view that we *can* know of the existence and essential nature of external objects, firstly, because we initially perceive and identify them as persistingly *whole* objects (not a number of properties), and secondly, because, as such, they give the fixed content to our thoughts, and meaning to our names and descriptive propositions that make logical, truth-functional language and knowledge possible. What determines the form, identity and properties of a physical object is its atomic/genetic microstructural essence; an essence that, because perceivable, serves to identify the referential object with its name in all possible worlds. Thus, the names that we use to represent reality do not refer to (Lockean) complex ideas, or (Husserlian) phenomenal essences, or a (Fregean/Russellian) ‘bundle of qualities’, but to real whole, physical objects. For, as Kripke says in *Naming and Necessity* (1981),

What I do deny is that a particular is nothing but a ‘bundle of qualities’, whatever that may mean...Philosophers have come to the opposite view through a false dilemma: they have asked, are these objects *behind* the bundle of qualities, or is the object *nothing but* the bundle? Neither is the case; this table is wooden, brown, in the room etc. It has all these properties and is not a thing without properties, behind them; but it should not therefore be identified with the set, or ‘bundle’, of its properties, nor with the subset of its essential properties. (p. 52)

Kripke’s whole objects are therefore initially identified and related, not on the basis of their primary or secondary properties, but, according to his *causal theory of reference*, through an ostensive, original ‘baptismal’ *naming* which thereafter necessarily links a natural kind object with its name, the meaning of that name now determinately defined as its referential object. This original name becomes the ‘rigid designator’ that will always and in all possible worlds refer only to its baptismal object, and all those within a linguistic community are thereafter entitled to use the name to refer to its original referent because of what Kripke calls a causal “chain of communication” which links all subsequent users to the original naming (ibid. p. 91). While a descriptive proposition may also designate an object, a description is, for Kripke, only a *non-rigid* designator, since it may not apply to the object/kind in all possible worlds. To demonstrate this rigid/non-rigid distinction, Kripke uses the example of a piece of yellow metal that was originally named ‘gold’. Hence, the name ‘gold’, as its rigid designator, refers to that object necessarily. The descriptive property ‘a yellow metal’, however, is a non-rigid designator in that it may not refer to gold in all possible worlds; it may, for example, be describing *iron pyrites*,



otherwise known as “fool’s gold” (ibid. p. 124). The proper name ‘Benjamin Franklin’ is also a rigid designator that *necessarily refers* to the boy/man baptized Benjamin Franklin, while the description “the inventor of bifocals” is a non-rigid designator in that it correctly describes Franklin in *this* world, but may, in another world, describe someone else (ibid. p. 145). Kripke is therefore suggesting a form of *nominal* essentialism that necessarily fixes the meaning of a name not to the perceived, descriptive properties of an object, but to the object itself, along with other seemingly identical objects of the same species. In this way, Kripke’s referentialism brings a fixed and universal determinism to notions of (nominal) meaning, identity and truth that Locke’s sense-based, nominalist definitions, and Russell’s logically ordered, but subjectively sense-based descriptions could not achieve.

For in viewing descriptions of an object or kind as non-rigid designators, Kripke infers that there are no *sensible* properties by which a name can be determinately defined, or its referent fixed and identified. Just because an animal might match the description “large carnivorous quadrupedal feline, tawny yellow in colour with blackish transverse stripes and white belly” does not in itself determine that animal to be part of the extension of the name ‘tiger’ (1981, p. 119). What *will* identify the animal as a tiger, however, is the scientific discovery of its “internal structure” or essence; that is, the molecular or genetic structure that it shares with others of the same kind (ibid. p. 120). Similarly, the internal structural essence that necessarily determines the extension of the name ‘gold’ is the atomic number ‘79’.<sup>14</sup> But, because the essential nature of an object/kind is microstructural and therefore only to be established scientifically, Kripke argues that it is not just *a priori* truths that can be seen as necessarily (and thus, universally) true, but also certain *a posteriori* facts, such as gold’s atomic number. If so, then the real, microstructural essence of physical objects that was, for Locke, insensible and therefore unknowable, has now, thanks to the microscopic observations of modern science, become Kripke’s indubitable foundation for certain knowledge – not only of the fixed, enduring *meaning* of names, but also of the originally fixed, microstructurally determined *nature* of the objects they represent. For, while it is possible that a piece of gold not have the qualities ‘yellow’ and ‘metal’ and still be gold, if it does not have the essential, atomic microstructure of 79 protons per atom, then it cannot be gold. The atomic structure is therefore the *real* essence that universally determines, identifies, and classifies the essential, phenomenal properties

---

<sup>14</sup>The atomic number of a chemical element such as *gold* is the number of protons in the nucleus of an atom of that element.

of all instances of gold. Similarly, although a substance may look, taste and feel like water (in having some or all of the properties by which water was originally described), if it is found to have a molecular structure other than H<sub>2</sub>O, then it cannot be water. That water is H<sub>2</sub>O is a statement of identity that, if true, is necessarily and *a posteriori* true (1981, p. 128). If this is the case, then such statements would seem to provide the long sought metaphysical and empirical foundation and justification for knowledge of the essential nature of the external physical world.

Whilst we may now know the real microstructural nature of objects/kinds, however, their essential, *macrostructural* nature can only be phenomenally and fragmentedly known via a Russellian definite description of phenomenal properties that may be identified as essential (and thus universally knowable) only insofar as these qualities are *intuitively perceived to follow from the microstructure* of the object (and its species). With regard to the properties ‘yellow’ and ‘metallic’ for example, Kripke says:

to the extent that such properties follow from the atomic structure of gold, they are necessary properties of it, even though they unquestionably are not part of the *meaning* of gold and were not known with *a priori* certainty. (1981, p. 125)

For Kripke, then, it is only through an original (whole) perception, naming, and the subsequent scientific identification of the real microstructure that we can fix the meaning of a name, logically identify and describe the essential phenomenal features of its referential objects, and thus produce and guarantee knowledge of the external world. And on this basis, it would seem that Kripke has been able to justify the possibility of, and present the means to objective, universal knowledge of the essential nature of a species or kind, from the observation of one particular. There are reasons, however, to think that this may not be the case.

Firstly, it is unclear as to why the perception of an object *as a whole* should make its existence any more real or certain than the perception of that object as its various (secondary) properties. In both cases the object is an object of *perception*, and when its microstructure is scientifically defined and held up as justification for certain phenomenal properties to be marked as essential, this microstructure is *also* an object/property of subjective perception. How, then, can it be seen as somehow more ‘real’ than, and thus a guarantee of the essentiality of, other phenomenal macro-properties, and therefore, of

universal knowledge? Further, it is unclear why an object's immediately *unobservable* but original and persistingly identical *microstructure* should be chosen as guarantor of its logically (i.e. binarily) derived, necessarily *intuitively* identified, essential properties, over and above the immediately *observable, perceptually* identifiable, original and persistingly identical *form* of the object. If the response should be that the whole macro-form of an object/kind is (as Plato says) always transient and mutable, whereas its genetic/atomic microstructure is fixed, immutable and fully determinate (and therefore a source of essential/epistemic certainty), then this response may be disputed for the following reasons.

Firstly, as the case of identical twins tells us, a fertilized egg might have genetic material identical to that of another (its twin), yet we would not say that the essential properties/nature of the individuals that develop from those eggs will also be identical (Feinstein & Church, 2010). Neither could we expect to determine either the identities or the differences in their essential natures by microscopically observing the *identical* genetic material within cells taken from the body of each individual. Secondly, scientific research (e.g. McClintock, 1929; Jaco et al, 2008) has shown that the chromosomes within each cell of a living body exchange genetic material as well as mutating, thereby causing cells within the same body to appear and function in non-homologous ways. Thus, while the number of chromosomes remains uniformly the same, other aspects of the genetic structure of an organism are constantly changing. There *is*, therefore, no fixed, uniform microstructure with which to identify and confirm phenomenal qualities as essential. Other research into the possibility of linking a particular gene to a phenotypic trait such as sex or (homo)sexuality, for example, indicates that the mechanism by which genes interact to produce a particular phenotype may be so complexly multi-layered as to make the correlation of specific genes to phenotypic traits doubtful or even impossible.<sup>15</sup> And thirdly, it seems that the order and function of genetic material is not only affected by the extra-nucleic protoplasmic material of each cell, and the position of a cell in relation to the overall *form* of the body, but, as cell biologist Bruce Lipton (2001a, b) contends, is also controlled and coordinated by the conscious *mind* as it correlates not just with the brain,

---

<sup>15</sup> See Anne Fausto-Sterling (1999) "*Sexing the body: How biologists construct human sexuality*"; Vernon Rosario (lecture): "From Hermaphrodites to SOX9: The molecular deconstruction of sex." Dept. of History, University of Auckland (August, 2005); and Mustanski, Dupree, Nievergelt, Schork & Hamer (2005) "A genomewide linkage scan of male sexual orientation".

but with the entire organism.<sup>16</sup> Thus, to reduce (identification of) the essential immaterial and material features of an object/kind to its purely material, supposedly fixed, determinate genetic/atomic property not only cannot be justified, but also appears to contradict Kripke's very own critique of Type-identity theory's reduction of *mental* states (e.g. 'pain') to purely *physical* states (e.g. brain 'C-fibres'). Because Kripke (1981, p. 155) argues here that mind and body are differently constituted and therefore irreducible entities, his reduction of the essential nature of an object/kind to a number of phenomenal properties intuitively defined in relation to its microstructure makes sense only if that kind is conceived as a purely physical *female* object of appearance, constructed, projected, named and defined by and in proper relation to the conscious *male* subject. And indeed, such an interpretation concurs with Butler's (1993) critique of Kripke's essentialism as phallogocentrically assuming man as its only baptismal subject, his traditionally patrilineal and "patronymic" appropriation, naming, knowledge, and inheritance of the female object world dependent upon the *permanence* of his own proper name/identity, and the *fluidity* of woman's name/identity; her supposedly essential, phenomenal traits actually fixed and defined only in relation to man (p. 153). Hence, Kripke's causal theory of reference simply perpetuates woman's incarceration as a phenomenal object constructed by and within (Husserlian) man's conscious, intentional mind. In grounding her nominal definition in a fixed, material essence, however, Kripke adds the final touch that turns her male-fabricated form into a seemingly predetermined reality.

For Kripke attaches a real, knowable, *material* essence to the bundle of properties that Plato attributed to 'woman' as the opposingly and asymmetrically defined, controlled (potentially uncontrollable) material aspect of man's *immaterial* essence/form, thus safely dissociating the rigidly-designated paternal subject from his own feminine projections, and most importantly, from the now invisible realm of fluidly de-formed, unnamed, demonically natural female bodies. It is this metaphysical dissociation and solipsistic isolation of the conscious, transcendent, rational subject from his projected, female material world of bodies, senses, desires and emotions - a separation that began with the Platonic/Aristotelian conception of a male-owned, immaterial *essence*, and thus a fixed, binary logical view of reality based on the 'man/woman' dualism - that anti-essentialist (male) philosophers from ancient times to the present day have worked to overcome.

---

<sup>16</sup> Lipton's research is backed by recent *epigenetic* research suggesting that gene expression is regulated and even inheritably altered by psychological and environmental factors (Feinstein & Church, 2010; Gottlieb, 2000).

## Anti-essentialist philosophers

### Heraclitus of Ephesus

Heraclitus rebukes the author of the line ‘Would that strife might be destroyed from among gods and men’: for there would be no musical scale unless high and low existed, nor living creatures without female and male, which are opposite. (Aristotle, *Eudemian Ethics* VII.1, 1235a25)

As mentioned in Chapter 1, prior and in contrast to Plato’s dualistic view of reality as divided into an immaterial realm of perfect Forms, and a material world of transient, imperfect objects, Heraclitus held to the monistic view that reality is underpinned by a universal “*logos*” or material intelligence, likened to an eternal “cosmic fire”, that is the fundamental cause and organizing principle of the material universe (Guthrie, 1967, p. 46). This universe, however, is devoid of any permanent and immutable forms, each animate and inanimate thing just a bundle of binarily opposed qualities that, in their constantly seesawing battle for ascendancy, keep all things in a permanent state of flux. For Heraclitus, reality is nothing but the unceasing ebb and flow of life in which, as their properties vie for supremacy, things come into and then pass out of existence, never ‘being’ but always ‘becoming’, as the destruction of one thing brings the creation of another. It is this constant conflict and movement between opposing qualities that is the very basis and generator of life itself, as things (continue to) exist as what they are, only by constantly changing. This seemingly paradoxical notion can be better understood if we examine Heraclitus’ epigram: “On those stepping into rivers staying the same other and other waters flow” (B12, cited in Graham, 2007). Here Heraclitus is (interpreted as) saying that a river is and continues to be the same river, only because of the constant and everchanging flow of the water that is its *content*; while those stepping into the river maintain the same identity as they and their watery surrounds change from one instant to the next (ibid. 3.1). It is therefore *because* the opposing properties of a thing are always in warring, seesawing flux that it can, for a time, attain a unified and knowable state of harmonious equilibrium. For, as Heraclitus says: “In change is rest” (1889, §83), but “A mixture separates when not kept in motion” (ibid. §84). It seems, then, for this pre-Socratic philosopher, that eternal flux is the essence of life.

Whilst any ideas of Platonic permanence and immutability of form within the natural world are, for Heraclitus, simply illusions of the senses, his conception of movement and change as the basis of the existence and identity of things has much in common with Aristotle's notion of an essential form that, through constant inner activity and movement, continues to be what it is. But where, for Aristotle, it is the essentially whole, *immaterial* form of a thing that causes its existence, movement, growth and change, for Heraclitus, it is the (rational) *material* co-instantiation of pairs of opposing but transformative properties that produces the unified form of a thing. And where both philosophers conceive of such non-essential, oppositional (qualitative, quantitative, and relational) properties as 'hot/cold', 'wet/dry', 'tall/short' and 'high/low', for example, as fluidly and alternately co-instantiating within the one living thing, Aristotle then looks to the essential/substantial form, function, and various fixed, non-opposing categories/properties of a thing, for the perception and knowledge of its essential nature. For, without stable, persisting, unifying form, says Aristotle, both existence and knowledge are impossible. Although Heraclitus also valued perception, experience, and the information they could give us about the natural world, it was not knowledge but *comprehension* of the underlying *logos* that he valued most, and encouraged men to pursue, when he said: "Those who hear and do not understand are like the deaf. Of them the proverb says: "Present, they are absent"" (1889, §3). That is, perception is useful only if accompanied by understanding of the rational principle underlying the shifting and multi-layered meanings of language and the world. Nevertheless, in common with Aristotle's epistemology, Heraclitus finds a measure of stable and persisting unity of being, and thus, a semi-stable foundation for (the possibility of) knowledge of reality, in his recognition that the constant flux of opposites creates (and exists within) a whole, *transiently unified* being that can therefore be perceived and known as such (Graham, 2007, §5). Thus, both philosophers recognize some kind of enduringly same, rationally ordered form - or *logos* - as integral to the existence and knowledge of the natural world.

However, as we have already seen, for Aristotle, this immaterial form belonged only to man, with woman therefore conceived and defined only as the (proper/improper) material aspects of his essential being. As a result, his originally logically non-opposed, co-existent categories of being (e.g. activity, passivity), as well as fluidly connected essential and accidental opposites (e.g. light/dark, rational/irrational, good/bad and dominant/subordinate) became separated and hierarchically affixed to the asymmetrical terms 'man' and

‘woman’ as the seemingly logically prescribed descriptions of their respective ontological natures. Although Heraclitus did not recognize man as having an originary, self-subsisting, immaterial soul, as the epigraph indicates, he preceded Aristotle in conceiving ‘male’ and ‘female’ as hierarchically opposed qualities that, because ascribed only to ‘man’, and not ‘woman’, were also contiguous. Like the opposites ‘high’ and ‘low’, ‘male’ and ‘female’ *do* have a middle, and can therefore coexist within the one living thing, perhaps with “strife” and change, but also without contradiction (1889, §46).

However, Heraclitus recognizes not just one kind of *logos*, but two: a material *logos* that is the source of fluidity, and an immaterial *Logos* or (male) God that bestows fixed, whole (immaterial) form onto fluid materiality.<sup>17</sup> And so, while ‘male’ and ‘female’ may coexist within the one unified, soul-fired being, it seems that that being, through his exclusive connection to the universal male soul, God or *Logos*, is, and can only be, a man. For, as with the other philosophers mentioned so far, it is only to men that Heraclitus is speaking and referring when he says of the unified souls produced through the conflict of opposites:

[W]hile wars and battles seem to us terrible, to God they do not seem so. For God in his dispensation of all events, perfects them into a harmony of the whole. (1889, §61)

And,

War is father of all and king of all; and some he has shown as gods, others men; some he has made slaves, others free. (*On Nature*, 1979, LXXXIII)

And finally,

A man, when drunk, is led by a beardless boy, stumbling, not perceiving where he is going, having his soul moist...A gleam of light is the dry soul, wisest and best. (ibid. CVI, CIX)

It seems, then, that it is only men who may, with divine assistance, ascend from a moist, material (female) state of conflicted and disunified existence, to an ultimately transcendent (male) state of perfectly whole, ensouled (and thus knowable) being. For, in all the aphorisms attributed to Heraclitus, not one recognizes woman as a unified, autonomously defined or ensouled living being.<sup>18</sup> Instead, he either objectifies the female in comparing a

---

<sup>17</sup> As a material principle, the *logos* is the source of constant flux (of opposites), but, in its transcendent immaterial form, the ‘*Logos*’ is the male God or divine soul that is the source of man’s emergent soul/form.

<sup>18</sup> Heraclitus’ sole philosophical work ‘*On Nature*’ did not survive; fragments of it are to be found, however, as quotations in the writings of others such as *Diogenes*, *Cratylus*, and *Sextus Empiricus*.

‘maiden’ to an ‘earthen pot’, when Plato, paraphrasing Heraclitus, says,

You are ignorant, my man, that there is a good saying of Heraclitus, to the effect that the most beautiful of apes is ugly when compared with another kind, and the most beautiful of earthen pots is ugly when compared with maidenkind, as says Hippias the wise. (*On Nature*, 1889, §99)<sup>19</sup>

Or else, he mythically dematerializes and irrationalizes woman with a disdainful reference to the ‘bacchanals’ - the frenzied, often irreverent followers of *Dionysus*, the feminine god of wine, nature and phallic fertility - when Clement of Alexandria says of Heraclitus,

Against whom, indeed, does Heraclitus of Ephesus prophesy? Against night-roamers, Magians, bacchanals, revelers in wine, the initiated. These he threatens with things after death and prophesies fire for them, for they celebrate sacrilegiously the things which are considered mysteries among men. (ibid. §124)

Under the intoxicating spell of the beautiful *Dionysus*, and wielding the *thyrsus*, the wooden, cone-tipped phallus symbolizing his fluid, wildly uninhibited sexuality, his companions - the once domesticated, but now wildly mountain-roaming, wine-drinking Bacchae women - were often driven to states of violent, orgiastic ecstasy that, at its climax, brought regenerative union with Dionysian divinity. Those bacchanals, however, who refused to recognize and worship the divine phallus of *Dionysus*, engaging instead in their own sacrilegious rituals, he accursed with madness, forcing them to participate in the ritualized killing and dismemberment of their children, other humans, and animals (Atsma, 2000). Thus, like the prophetically raving Sibyl, the maenadic woman was possessed by either god or demon, the (Cumaeon) Sibyl’s refusal to submit to *Apollo* dooming her to a tortured, withered, disembodied existence as his eternal (female) *voice*.

Thus, while Heraclitus (contra Plato/Aristotle) makes no attempt to define the natures of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ in terms of logically fixed, mutually exclusive opposites, his metaphysics is actually even more negative, in denying real woman any kind of defined, recognized, material existence at all. For nowhere is the term ‘woman’ mentioned in the writings of Heraclitus, and it is this symbolic non-recognition and *non-existence* of real woman (even as the material/maternal property of man) that is the prerequisite for the qualities of male *and* female, masculine *and* feminine, mind *and* body, heterosexual *and*

---

<sup>19</sup> Plato criticized the ‘wise’ sophist *Hippias* for being ignorant of his ignorance, and for valuing imitation over truth.



homosexual to be seen as fluidly (though hierarchically) coexisting within the one (Dionysian) man/god. As his immanent *logos/Logos*, pure, proper woman is reduced to and represents the fluid material/maternal *origin*, the emerging (Paternally bestowed) phallic form/soul, but also, the sexually improper, de-formed demise, of the Heraclitean male subject. For if a light, dry, unified (ultimately immortal, male) soul is something that only the wise man shares with (and submissively receives from) God/gods, it seems that, for Heraclitus, as for Plato and his followers, it is the formless fluidity of the real, natural sexual female body that not only gives birth to, but also threatens the death (or Fall) of, men's 'moist' souls.<sup>20</sup> As Heraclitus says,

For souls it is death to become water, for water death to become earth, but from earth water is born, and from water soul. (B36, cited in Graham, 2007)

Although the dry, fiery soul of the Dionysian man/god may be male and/or female, masculine and/or feminine, heterosexual and/or homosexual, what it cannot safely be, is *wet*. For, whilst Heraclitus tells us that "It is delight, not death for souls to become moist" (1979, CVIII), the sexually moist, femininely submissive soul risks the de-forming, castrating wetness - the female fluidity - that would mean ignominious death to a once dry phallo-logical soul. Could it be, then, that Scheman's logic of male homophobia - relieving the fear of feminization/death - originated not with Descartes, but with the seemingly fluid, pluralist, pre-essentialist philosophy of Heraclitus? A look at Heraclitean aphorisms regarding the god Dionysus and his mysterious phallic rituals suggests so. A key but obscure part of the Dionysian myth concerns his watery descent into Hades to retrieve his dead mother Semele, and his meeting with the shepherd Prosymnus who guides Dionysus through the Hadean lake in return for the promise of sexual favours. Dionysus agrees, but on returning, finds that Prosymnus has died. Keeping his promise, Dionysus fashions a phallus out of figwood, and ritually sodomizes himself on Prosymnus' grave (Atsma, 2000). It is this ritual, then, that inspires the secret, mysterious initiation rites of men, and the frenzied sacrilegious, phallic festivals of which Heraclitus so disapproves, and that also explains why Dionysus is associated with wine, fertility, unrestrained desire, darkness, death, but also rebirth. In desiring and enacting his own sexual subjugation, and thus,

---

<sup>20</sup> Feminist philosophers such as Irigaray (1985a, b) and Kelly Oliver (1995) have argued extensively for the psychoanalytically driven association of woman (as threatening mother and evil temptress) with water and fluidity (and particularly the sea/'mer') in the writings of various male philosophers e.g. Plato (1994), Kant (1834), Nietzsche (1961). It is also significant that *Zeus'* mortal (submissive male) lover *Ganymede* served as his water-bearer and (ultimately immortal) mead-bearer.

castrated, feminized death, the bi-gendered Dionysus is also able to rebirth himself via his passive reception of the ambrosial seed/form from the life-giving *thyrsus*. But, while the divine wine and soma of the gods promised immortality to Dionysus and his followers, for his cousin, King Pentheus, who denied Dionysus' godliness and despised (but also desired) his feminine appearance, penetrating feminization by the angry god brought only dismemberment and death at the hands of Pentheus' similarly doubting, and thus maddened, maenadic mother (Wohl, 2005, p. 144).<sup>21</sup> It is the perpetuation of these punitive, redemptive, and regenerative sexual practices by Dionysian cult followers that Titus Livius describes in his History of Rome:

From the time when the rites were held promiscuously, with men and women mixed together, and when the license offered by darkness had been added, no sort of crime, no kind of immorality, was left unattempted. There were more obscenities practiced between men than between men and women. Anyone refusing to submit to outrage or reluctant to commit crimes was slaughtered as a sacrificial victim. (1976, Bk. 39.13)

Thus, sexual submission to the divine god/father promises ambrosial immortality, but submission to an (evil) other means death, for "Dionysus, in whose honor they rave in bacchic frenzy, and Hades are the same" (1889, §127), his Phallus signifying eternal form/*Logos*/rebirth, or deformed fluidity/madness/death. Viewed within this context, the original Platonic/Aristotelian misconception of 'essence' as the immaterial source, form, and guarantee of man's immortality, of 'woman' as the logically defined, controlled material property that constitutes and ensures his earthly existence, and the subsequent history of essentialist misconceptions of both, appear to be no more than the philosophical subject's ever more fearful bid to escape the fatal consequences of his own phallic obsessions.

### Arthur Schopenhauer

Our existence has no foundation on which to rest except the transient present. Thus its form is essentially unceasing motion, without any possibility of that repose which we continually strive after...In such a world, where...no enduring state is possible, where everything is involved in restless change and confusion and keeps itself on its tightrope by continually striding forward...happiness is not so much as to be thought of. (1970, p. 52)

As the essentialist genealogy has shown, Western philosophers in search of a fixed, coherent metaphysics and thus a stable base and method to attain universal knowledge of

---

<sup>21</sup> See Euripides' play, *The Bacchae*, at <http://records.viu.ca/~Johnstoi/euripides/euripides.htm>

human and worldly existence continued to remain faithful to the Platonic/Aristotelian notion of essence and principles of binary logic, despite a persistent need to rely on the existence of a non-deceiving God, or on the unquestionable authority of a transcendent rational subject, to overcome the epistemic limitations (and feared temptations) of the sensual, subjective body. But, as we have seen, this essentialist allegiance led only to the fearful solipsistic isolation of the conscious male subject, in his failure to construct a coherent, universally accepted metaphysics. Arthur Schopenhauer attempted to free this subject from his isolated and obsessive pursuit, by envisioning what Nietzsche later announced as the death of God, of truth, and thus, of the transcendent, knowing subject.

Schopenhauer (1966) began from the Kantian epistemic model of the conscious subject that logically constructs and knows his own world of phenomenal objects. But he rejects Kant's assertion that the transcendent subject can know the nature of phenomenal objects but not that of the noumenal 'things in themselves' that cause those phenomena, arguing that this assertion results from the mistaken (essentialist) separation of the subjective mind from its body. As conscious subject, Schopenhauer argued that he could not only objectively perceive his *own* body as a phenomenal object, but also subjectively experience it as a "thing-in-itself" (p. 172), with its own impulses, desires, sensations, and emotions. Thus, the phenomenal object/body and the thing-in-itself are not to be seen as separate entities, with the latter causing the former, but as two coexistent aspects of the one thing - two sides of the same coin - with neither aspect causing the other, and both able to be understood (Wicks, 2007, §4). Further, if Schopenhauer could experience his own body as inseparably *objective* and *subjective*, then, by analogy, he could assume other *like* bodies to be similarly experienced. And, as the title of Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* (1966) tells us, the subjective side of a living body (that is, the thing-in-itself) is its original, irrational, fluidly indeterminate 'Will', and the objective side is its 'Representation' - the phenomenal objects or ideas that manifest that will. For Schopenhauer, this will is the 'Will to Live' which he sees as the fundamental principle of human and worldly existence; a natural impulse towards knowledge, control, and persisting existence. Devoid of reason, the will to live, says Robert Wicks, is "an endless striving and blind impulse with no end in view, devoid of knowledge, lawless, absolutely free, entirely self-determining and almighty" (2007, §4). Fragmented into transient but nevertheless perceivable and comprehensible objects of its desires, the will endlessly reshapes its own phenomenal self and world, as the means to its survival.

As a modification of the Aristotelian/Kantian categories of being and knowledge, Schopenhauer posits his four-fold “principle of sufficient reason” and its four different and parallel modes of reasoning as the basis and justification for (comprehension of) the existence and nature of four different kinds of phenomenal objects: material objects, abstract ideas, mathematical concepts, and motivations (1966, p. 15). Thus, an object exists and is understood only if sufficient reason (or cause) can be given for its existence/nature, that reason being based upon *relations* between objects of the same kind. The idea of God, for example, cannot be employed to justify or explain the existence or nature of material objects. While the Will-to-Live constantly manifests as phenomenal objects (as situated within space/time, and determined by natural law), it also, at a metaphysical level, manifests as timeless, universal objectifications (akin to Platonic *Ideas*) that are the singular patterns for transiently and multiply individuated material objects. Unaware of these universals, however, man strives to impose his own en-forming objectifications upon the unruly Will of the natural world, thus creating a world of never-ending violence and suffering where individuated beings struggle against and destroy themselves and each other in the drive to dominate, accumulate, consume, and thus persist. Since men’s desires must inevitably conflict, and can never actually achieve a fixed, satisfied existence, material existence offers only endless and unavoidable strife, sin, guilt and misery. Thus, for Schopenhauer, as for Augustine before him, man’s bodily desires are “originally and in their essence sinful and reprehensible, and the entire will to live itself reprehensible” (1970, p. 63). Because men are destined to be driven and consumed by their own sinful, insatiable will and desires, Schopenhauer concludes that earthly life has no purpose, meaning or pleasure, offering nothing but restlessness and suffering to those trapped within a Godless world of fleeting objects for which they feel only frustrated, painful, guilt-ridden desire, or bored, unfulfilled satiety. For, as he says in *Essays and Aphorisms* (1970):

It is a sufficiently evil place: it is Purgatory, it is Hell, and devils are not lacking in it. Only consider what men sometimes inflict upon men, with what ingenious torments one will slowly torture another to death, and ask yourself whether devils could do more. And sojourn in this place is likewise eternal for all those who obdurately persist in affirming the will to live. (p. 186)

Because intellectual comprehension of this state of perpetual suffering only serves to intensify it, Man’s only hope of relief and redemption lies in the denial of the will-to-live, through the suppression of the sexual drive that lies at its core. For while sex may be

necessary to relieve that drive, and to propagate the essential, generative will-to-live (woman contributing the accidental, will-based intellect that disintegrates at death), it is only through the transcendence of sinful, lustful desires that man's soul may escape its tortured embodiment and find immortal bliss.

For Schopenhauer, this transcendence is to be achieved through the pursuit and practice of *ascetic detachment* from desire and the will, and from the earthly objects that it creates and devours. And it promises a state of tranquillity in which the soul may perceive and know the universal objects or Ideas, not via the higher powers of reason (as Plato and Descartes believed), nor the powers of sensory intuition (as Aristotle believed), but via the *aesthetic perception* of the universal Idea manifested by, and imaginatively apprehended within, individual objects of perception. Not every man has this ability to aesthetically perceive the universal in the particular, however. For, as Schopenhauer explains in *The World as Will and Idea* (1964),

All profound knowledge...is rooted in the *perceptive* apprehension of things...[a] generative process in which every genuine work of art, every immortal thought, received the spark of life. ...Always to see the universal in the particular is just the fundamental character of genius, while the normal man knows in the particular only the particular as such, for only as such does it belong to the actual which alone has interests for him, *i.e.*, relations to the *will*. (p. 297)

It is the powers of aesthetic perception, imagination and “reflective” representation found only within the artistic genius that enable the ascetic, aesthetically gifted individual to see beyond the earthly realm of the Will and its transient, unsatisfying objects and frustrated desires, and thus know - and become objectively *one* with - the pure, universal realm of timeless, changeless Platonic Ideas. In this transcendent realm, the ‘subject/object’ antithesis that is the principle of material existence falls away, earthly *duality* and *multiplicity* giving way to transcendental *unity* as the conscious intellect apprehends and merges with the realm of perfectly formed, universal Ideas. As Schopenhauer says of this unified intellect: “completely severed from its origin, the will, it is now the world as idea itself, concentrated in *one* consciousness” (ibid. p. 298).

This blissful state of transcendent, will-less unity can be seen as the philosophical equivalent of the Buddhist state of *nirvana*, or the Christian ascent into union with God, or the Hindu reunification with Brahman (the universal soul), all of which promise escape

from insatiable, lustful object-directed desires that threaten the soul's existence and its immortality through attainment of the perfect (male) form. In each case, only those with higher powers of the mind/soul may achieve this state of bliss. The other feature that Schopenhauer's path to spiritual immortality shares with these religious paths, as with the other metaphysical paths traced in this genealogy, is his conception of the conscious transcendent subject as exclusively male, and of woman as the fluid material origin, and the sinful sexual demise of that subject; that is, as man's 'will-to-live'. For, as he says of the aesthetic genius:

The fundamental condition [of genius] is an abnormal predominance of sensibility over irritability and reproductive power; and what makes the matter more difficult, this must take place in a male body. (Women may have great talent, but no genius, for they always remain subjective.). (1964, p. 311)

Thus, only those with a male body can be self-cultivated into ultimately transcendent subjectivity, albeit one that must objectify, control and overcome its otherwise "sinful" bodily Will in order to survive. And, as the higher male intellect is one that has escaped "its mother soil, the will" while the normal intellect, forever ruled by unquenchable desire, is "still cleaving to its stem" (ibid. p. 309), it seems that, like Heraclitus and the essentialist philosophers that followed, Schopenhauer reduces woman to the 'sinful' fluid source and sexual downfall of man, as well as the submissive, always childish property that constructs him and protects him from that fall. Thus, from *Essays and Aphorisms*:

[woman] expiates the guilt of life not through activity but through suffering, through the pains of childbirth, caring for the child and subjection to the man... Women are... childish, silly and short-sighted, in a word big children, their whole lives long: a kind of intermediate stage between the child and the man, who is the actual human being, 'man'. (1970, p. 81)

As man's originary, phenomenally manifested Will, woman is the wilfully submissive property that constitutes, but also constantly threatens to destroy, his embodied subjectivity, and on this basis, can be seen, once again, as a projected, controlled representation of the desire that is at the core of man's will-to-live: his feared, forbidden, feminizing desire to submit. It is this repressed, projected, ultimately unfulfilled desire, then, that explains heterosexual man's hellish, miserably unsatisfied material existence, and the need to transcend it. For, in reuniting object with subject, body with its emergent mind, and thus, feminine with masculine properties within the previously divided Kantian

man, whilst Schopenhauer retains a measure of control of his female aspect by maintaining its conception as male-defined, explainable phenomenal objects, their transience exposes him to the constant risk of loss of control of the female will (to submit), and thus, his feminized extinction. Hence the safer, but solipsistically isolated existence of the Kantian subject is replaced with the guilty, miserable, tortured existence of the re-embodied Schopenhauerian subject. It is from this abyss of perpetual guilt, misery and suffering that Friedrich Nietzsche worked to free modern man, by injecting the revitalizing blood of the fluidly and boldly destructive/creative Dionysian textual warrior into his limp, pallid veins.

### **Friedrich Nietzsche**

Although Nietzsche advocates writing and reading as bloodletting in the manly warrior, he forgets about women's blood that flows into new life without the knife, without self-mutilation or the mutilation of others. Perhaps interpretation can be of the body and fecund without also being violent. (Oliver, 1995, p. 24)

Nietzsche has been recognized by many, including feminist philosophers Luce Irigaray (1981) and Kelly Oliver (1995), as a visionary who glimpsed something beyond the ever more fixed, transcendent, God-authorized essentialism of traditional metaphysics and language, and who, in proclaiming the death of God, the transcendent subject, and absolute truth, opened traditional philosophical discourse to other voices and thus, other perspectives and values. Observing what he saw as the hopeless, nihilistic decadence and consequent ill health of a modern European culture emasculated and rendered almost lifeless by reductive, guilt inducing, logical and ecclesiastical laws and prohibitions, Nietzsche found hope in Schopenhauer's creative, destructive 'will-to-live' and his attempts to unite the essential dualisms of metaphysics, language and morality.

Like Schopenhauer, Nietzsche rejected the Platonic/Aristotelian notion of a real, original, immaterial essence/form that can be known, defined and represented according to the rules and structures of binary logic, along with the Kantian notion of a transcendent subject who logically constructs and knows his own world of apparent objects. For Nietzsche, it was the God-authorized metaphysical and linguistic reduction of the world and meaning to fixed, mutually exclusive opposites (e.g. male/female, mind/body, good/evil) along with the Christian emphasis on suffering and ascetic denial as man's only path to redemption, that had combined to produce the 'disgusting' moral weakness and aimlessness - "the great

nausea” - of modern man (1976, p. 381). Therefore, following Heraclitus, Nietzsche looked to the Greek (feminine) god *Dionysus* for the cure to what he saw as an overabundance of (masculine) *Apollonian* rational and religious regulation and (moral) restraint of overly individualized beings within a weak, apathetic (or what might today be called a democratically ‘dumbed down’) society.<sup>22</sup> What was needed to restore the health and vigour of modern man was an infusion of fluid, virile, violent ‘Dionysian’ blood, sexual passion and destructive creativity, an infusion that Nietzsche sought to deliver poetically via the prophetic, hermetic figure of *Zarathustra* (1969).

In contrast to the miserable Schopenhauerian man, incessantly driven and tormented by, and thus needing to ascetically suppress and transcend his sinful will-to-live, the Dionysian-willed man, represented by *Zarathustra*, is a fearlessly embodied, passionately sensual “warrior” (ibid. p. 68) driven to fully *express* his primal, fluidly impulsive will, and thus to live, love and (re)create dangerously, whilst cultivating himself to ultimately rise above and laugh at the horrors of an earthly life that he thereby accepts and ecstatically affirms. But, the will that drives *Zarathustra* is not the Schopenhauerian ‘will-to-live’, but rather, the passionate, aggressive “will to power” (ibid. p. 137), an initially submissive, but ultimately dominant force that is certainly *not* to be ascetically suppressed, objectified or expiated, but rather, aggressively *channelled* and *sublimated* into the highest forms of aesthetic creativity, such as great art, poetry or music, in this way permitting the warrior to ultimately overcome (though not abandon) his bodily existence. Thus, through *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche also introduces his concept of the *Übermensch*. The “Superman” (ibid. p. 103) is the non-transcendental, spiritual *ideal* to which the aesthetic warrior aspires by overcoming his phallic will to dominate, consume and recreate the material world, thereby attaining the enlightened state of unity and wisdom from which to create his own life-affirming values. It is this figure of the Dionysian-willed Zarathustrian warrior that Nietzsche wishes modern man to embrace and become - the fully embodied, ‘hard’, red-blooded, courageously creative warrior that, wielding pen rather than sword, writes with his own blood as he constantly destroys, recreates and reinterprets the meanings, metaphors and texts with which he constantly reconstructs and reinscribes his own and other bodies. Hence, it is to become this “brave, unconcerned, mocking, violent” (1976, p. 153) destructive creator of always fluidly multiple truths, meanings and values through the sublimated expression of

---

<sup>22</sup>*Apollo* was the Greek god of the sun, light, manly beauty, order, individuality, and reasoned self-restraint, while his brother *Dionysus* was the phallic god of wine, chaos, unrestrained passion, intuition, and the earthly, feminine cycles of fertility and eternal rebirth.



his own phallic 'will to power' that Nietzsche is exhorting weak, aimless, emasculated modern man, when he says,

And if your hardness will not flash and cut and cut to pieces:  
how can you one day - create with me?  
For creators are hard... Only the noblest is perfectly hard.  
This new law-table do I put over you, O my brothers:  
*Become hard!* (1969, p. 231)

In this way, Nietzsche uses the figures of the modern warrior and *Übermensch* to destabilize and deconstruct the Platonic/Cartesian notion of essence and its fixed, hierarchically opposed dualisms that had led to the lifeless petrification of traditional notions of reality, truth, meaning and subjectivity. For Nietzsche, the transcendent, omnipotent *God* (with his prohibitive, guilt-laden, punitive morality), and the transcendent philosophical *subject* (with his logically fixed metaphysics, language, and universal truths), having led modern man to the brink of nihilistic emptiness and solipsistic isolation, are now dead. What is needed, if he is to avert the fall, is a new metaphysics and language that replaces these essentially fixed, divided forms with a (Dionysian) playful fluidity and plurality of existence, language and meaning, and a new religion based on an earthly, embodied spirituality, and thus, new ways of constructing, perceiving, representing and valuing his self and world that inspire and invigorate. Nietzsche's strategy for this reconception is to firmly *reunite* the singular philosophical and religious subject with his female 'other' - the sensual, desiring, wilful, natural body and its fluidity, multiplicity, and difference of forms, meanings and representations.

For Nietzsche, as for Heraclitus and Schopenhauer, there *is* no originary, essentially fixed form to life or language. The material body and its will to power are the naturally driven, fluidly chaotic source of a conscious, dominant, subjective self that, by creatively cultivating, sublimating and overcoming its will and desires, shapes, limits, and gives mutable (but ultimately spiritually unified) *form* to its immanent being. Within this subject, the dualities of (Apollonian) mind and (Dionysian) body, of male and female are (albeit hierarchically) united in a way that permits the (Zarathustrian) subject to construct and express himself and his world in a controlled but also playfully varied way. To permit this, Nietzsche works to free language and logos from its logically fixed, referential structuring, by creating a playful synthesis of poetry with theory, metaphor with literalism, and parody with seriousness. For Nietzsche, the seemingly essentially fixed, referential meanings of

our words and concepts are, as Alan Schrift puts it, “simply congealed metaphors, figurative descriptions whose metaphorical nature has been forgotten” (1996, p. 332). That is, over time, the mutable, metaphorically figurative content of a concept has come to be seen as fixed, immutable, and literal, thereby seemingly enabling the construction of universal truths and knowledge. Therefore, as textual warrior, Nietzsche endeavours to separate language, meaning and truth from notions of (male) singularity, objectivity, determinacy and universality, linking them instead with (female) plurality, fluidity and relativity through his bold, bloodied, and playfully unconcerned use of *metaphor*, *interpretation* and *perspective*.

For example, in his writings, Nietzsche variously employs the concept of ‘woman’ as metaphor for man’s “wisdom” (*Genealogy*), “Life” (*The Dance Song*), “truth” (*The Gay Science*), his “most dangerous plaything” (*Zarathustra*, 1969, p. 91), “bitch Sensuality” (*ibid.* p. 81), “shadow”, and most alluringly, his “eternity”. For, only in her guise as ‘eternity’ would Zarathustra want to marry ‘woman’:

Never yet did I find the woman by whom I wanted children,  
unless it be this woman, whom I love: for I love you, O Eternity!  
*For I love you, O Eternity!* (1969, p. 245)

Having utilized Apollonian and Dionysian imagery to unite the modern subject’s rational *mind* with his sensual *body*, Nietzsche’s use of ‘woman’ as metaphor might appear to be further opening subject-centred philosophy and language to its *female* ‘other’. But, in using this term to represent the various psychological, physical and sexual properties or aspects of male subjects such as Zarathustra, the warrior, and the *Übermensch*, Nietzsche denies real woman any fixed, defined material (or phenomenal) existence whatsoever.

For, it is as passive, predicated, metaphorical *object* that Nietzsche appropriates and incorporates woman and the feminine into his writings, and, in so doing, he turns her into what Irigaray calls man’s bloodless, lifeless “language-body” (1991, p. 65). Thus, as Irigaray’s *Ariadne* laments to her beloved *Dionysus*/Nietzsche, “Something red was lacking, a hint of blood and guts to revive the will, and restore its strength” (*ibid.* p. 79).<sup>23</sup>

---

<sup>23</sup>As *Ariadne*, the forlorn lover of *Dionysus*/Nietzsche, Irigaray complains that, having appropriated the feminine/maternal, he cannot love her/woman, but sees and loves only himself and feminine projections of that self.

For, in using 'woman' to constitute man's subjectivity, even her real reproductive function is assumed by the self-overcoming *Zarathustra* who, as the "manly mother", usurps his mother's procreative power and thereafter gives birth not only to art and culture, but also - in his "eternal recurrence" - to himself. Thus says *Zarathustra*,

For the creator himself to be the child new-born he must also be willing to be the mother and endure the mother's pain. Truly I have gone my way through a hundred souls and through cradles and birth-pangs. I have taken many departures, I know the heart-breaking last hours. (1969, p. 111)

It seems, then, that *Zarathustra*'s sexual, self-rebirthing 'will to power' is both dominantly male and submissively female. As such, it would explain the saintly man's need for self-mortifying rituals that control and atone for the "torrential passion" of his "bitch Sensuality" (ibid.), the Zarathustrian warrior's need for 'hardness' and the courage to overcome, and his desire to sublimate that potentially fatal will so that, like other 'higher men', he may reach the ecstatic, ambrosial (duality- and object-free) state of spiritual oneness. In which case, like Heraclitus, Nietzsche conceives the natural sexual female body is the unbounded, fluid source, but also (as his feared, lingering desire to submit) the potential death of the warrior/higher man, hence explaining *Zarathustra*'s need to fly over life, far from the watery depths where the "dark monster" (ibid, p. 175) lies. If this is the case, then Nietzsche seemingly frees traditional theories of subjectivity, language, meaning and truth from a Platonically fixed, binarily logical essentialism only by maintaining an underlying ontological essentialism that conceives the natural male body as having an enduringly whole, purposeful, cultivable *form*, and the natural female body as completely devoid of form or properties, and therefore as incapable of cultivation into subjectivity. Hence Irigaray's description of Nietzsche's woman:

[I]n the eternal recurrence, she [woman] attends your wedding celebration, she takes part in it, but you yourself are bride and groom. She keeps hold of the thread, anchors the harmony, sings the tune. An accompaniment that is necessary to you while remaining fundamentally reactive as long as you do not also allow her her self. (1991, p. 32)

In other words, the Nietzschean embodied male subject can now be (hierarchically) masculine and feminine, mind and body, (cultivated) appearance and reality, only at the expense of the (de-formed) subjective and symbolic non-existence of real woman, and thus the perpetuation of the 'man/woman' dualism through the (unexplained) granting of a material and ultimately spiritual form to man, but not woman. It was this metaphysical

dualism that Jacques Derrida set out to deconstruct and rethink in a way that may finally obviate man's need for this "logic of male homophobia" (Scheman, 1993, p. 150).

### Jacques Derrida

"Woman" needs the castration effect, because without it she would not be able to seduce or stir desire. But obviously she does not believe in it. (*Spurs*, 1979, p. 362)

Analyzing various Western philosophical texts, Derrida argues in *Of Grammatology* (1998) that traditional notions of an essential, autonomous, transcendent subject who searches for self-evident universal truths and thereby gains objective knowledge of the essentially fixed nature of reality are not autonomous or self-evident notions at all, but have, under the rules of Platonic logic, implicitly depended for their (fixed) meaning upon the repressive exclusion of their opposing and subordinated 'other'. Philosophical concepts of 'mind', 'truth' and 'essence', for example, historically and metaphysically conceived as having a pure, self-evident form and definition, are actually the privileged positive terms within a binary pair in which the secondary term - 'body', 'untruth' and 'appearance' respectively - is the lacking or negative and thus contradictory version of the primary term. While both terms are therefore necessarily identified and defined in terms of (difference from) the other, the privileged "self-presence" (1998, p. 98) granted by patriarchal metaphysics to all primary terms has depended upon the *absence* of the secondary terms from that and other dominant discourses (e.g. science, religion), a privilege and dependency that the primary term or "*logos*"<sup>24</sup>, and "logocentric" discourses and knowledges have been unable to accept or acknowledge (ibid. p. 8). Whilst remaining true to the Saussurean structuralist premise that we cannot step outside the difference-based dualistic order that has historically structured language and meaning, Derrida's aim is to force metaphysical theory to acknowledge its reliance on false dualisms, and to then deconstruct, displace, and thereby subvert these rigidly reductive, hierarchical structures, replacing them with a pure fluidity and multiplicity of meaning. But in contrast to Nietzsche's use of metaphor, perspectivity and textual interpretation, Derrida employs what he calls methods of "deconstruction" (ibid. p. 14) and "displacement" (ibid. p. 37) to dismantle and unite binary logic's fixed, mutually exclusive opposites, thereby bringing

---

<sup>24</sup>As stated earlier, the '*logos*' is the rational principle that orders the universe. For Heraclitus, the material *logos* is the originary female principle of flux, whereas, for Plato, the immaterial *Logos* is the immanently female, ultimately transcendent, male principle of fixed, whole, rationally ordered Form or soul.

the inferior, absent feminine 'other' into traditional metaphysics, language and theories of subjectivity.

Derrida (1981, 1998) begins his deconstruction of logocentric binary logic by *reversing* and thus challenging the fixed, privileged position of the primary term. Taking the mind/body dualism, for example, Derrida argues that, because the secondary term 'body' could just as easily be the primary, present term of the pair, with 'mind' as its negative, absent 'other', neither term can be seen as necessarily superior to the other. Having thereby destabilized the previously fixed hierarchy of value of its opposing terms, Derrida then further disrupts the binary structure by arguing that the absent, repressed term actually has primacy over the dominant term, since it is the *lack* of the former that produces the latter (Grosz, 1990, p. 93). Within the 'sameness/difference' binary, for example, 'difference' should be privileged over 'sameness', since, although repressed, it is never completely absent from conscious thought, and through the repeated appearances of its textual or material trace - or what he calls its "differance" - produces the dominant term as its effect (1998, p. 23).<sup>25</sup> Similarly, the repression of the negative term 'body' leaves a series of "material traces" or "textual marks" which produce the term 'mind' (Grosz, 1990, p. 95). Because of the gaps and differences between these traces and marks, however, the meaning of the term 'mind' is never fixed or singular, but always shifting and therefore, always deferred. Derrida's next move is to *displace* the suppressed negative term, and thrust it, as Elizabeth Grosz says, "into the very heart of the oppositional term" (ibid. p. 97), thereby uniting the two terms within consciousness, and creating the possibility for their mutual expression within speech and discourse. The final deconstructive move is the creation and inclusion into the united binary of a third term - a "hinge" (1998, p. 69) word such as 'trace', 'differance', 'pharmakon', and 'hymen'- in which the iterative residue of the 'other' becomes the (previously logically excluded) middle term; the 'undecidable' origin that is the *precondition* for the emergence of always fluidly contiguous and playfully ambiguous terms. The "hymen", for example, is the 'hinge' term that Derrida uses to disrupt what he sees as the logocentric/phallogocentric binary logic of discourses such as Husserl's phenomenology of consciousness, and Lacan's linguistic theory of subjectivity.<sup>26</sup> As the blank folds of paper on which the pen/phallus leaves its trace,

---

<sup>25</sup> The term 'differance' therefore means neither sameness nor difference, but contains the rudiments of both.

<sup>26</sup> In phallogocentric texts, the phallus plays the role of the central, privileged, authoritative signifier that the *logos* (God, reason) plays within logocentric texts.

the *hymen* is neither confusion nor distinction, neither identity nor difference, neither consummation nor virginity, neither the veil nor unveiling, neither the inside nor the outside etc. (*Positions*, 1981, p. 43)

Neither one term nor the other, the (intact) ‘hymen’ is the fluid source and condition of both. As the undecidable origin of ordered language and meaning, the hymenal folds trap phallic *disseminations* (ibid. p. 44), and prevent the seeding of truths that are not also untruths; of terms that are not simultaneously their opposites. It is via this three-fold deconstructive “feminine operation” (1979, p. 49) that Derrida seeks to reconceive the binary logical structure of language, and thus enable the linguistic (re)construction and representation of reality in terms of fluid and multiple forms of identity *and* difference, rather than binarily fixed, reductive forms of specularized *sameness*.

Like Nietzsche, Derrida locates the ‘man/woman’ dualism as the foundation for Plato’s essence-based, binarily structured metaphysics and epistemology, and therefore applies his deconstructive techniques with a view to replacing its fixed, hierarchically opposed, ‘middle-excluding’ structure with one permitting a fluidity, multiplicity, and therefore a constant deferral and uncertainty of meaning, identity and subjectivity. The secondary, negative term ‘woman’ (or ‘female’) is therefore retrieved from the unconscious, its textual trace becoming the hinge term from which the playful, sometimes contradictory male-female continuum of meanings arises. In bringing ‘woman’ back to consciousness, Derrida variously employs the term as metaphor for ‘truth’ and ‘untruth’ (1979, p. 51), for “style” (ibid. p. 57) as opposed to the lack of style in logocentric texts, for truth’s “dissimulatrix” (ibid. p. 97) and for “the *abyss* of distance” (ibid. p. 49). However, in using ‘woman’ and her sexual parts as the metaphorical tools with which to deconstruct the essential, transcendent male subject and then reconstruct him out of the whole/parts of his repressed feminine ‘other’, Derrida seems only to further divide and more deeply inscribe the man/woman dualism as, with his use of woman as metaphor for style, he thrusts not *word* but *sword* into the heart (and hymen) of woman as real sexual female subject.

As ‘style’, ‘woman’ symbolizes more than just the traces, gaps, gestures, silences and other feminine features within text, speech and other systems of symbolic exchange. As Derrida reveals in *Spurs* (1979, p. 41), ‘woman’ as “style” is also the “*spur*”, the pen/sword that

draws on its tautly veiled “apotropaic power”<sup>27</sup> to parry with and successfully “spurn” that of the evil adversary - the “menacing form” - that threatens (feminizing) castration and death. Hence, having been previously conceived as the phenomenal/metaphorical objects with which Schopenhauerian/Nietzschean man constructs his immanent subjectivity, ‘woman’, in her Derridean unification with ‘man’, becomes the metaphorical feminine *phallus/pen* that inscribes and protects man’s ‘becoming woman’; a phallic pen that - like an “umbrella” (ibid.) - is neither parrying, perforating weapon, nor imperforate, hymeneal veil, but both at once. As Derrida’s veiled ‘style’, ‘woman’ effects the (symbolic) auto-castration that, in rendering the phallic body undecidably masculine *and* feminine, initiates “a *suspension* of the relation with castration” (ibid. p. 59). In which case, for the Derridean heterosexual male subject, the masquerade that signals his ‘becoming feminine’ need no longer hold the fear of submissive desires, castration and death as previously controlled by fixed, binary definition or sublimation. Armed with his feminine phallus/pen, his unforgettable, impenetrable ‘umbrella’, the Derridean warrior repeatedly pierces the hymen of real woman, projecting his own submissive desires and, in dismembering (and appropriating the sexual parts of) her body, reducing her to non-existence in order to construct and secure his exclusive subjectivity and place as sole creator of meaning and of the textual universe. In this way metaphorical ‘woman’ serves to ameliorate the “apotropaic anxiety” (1979, p. 41) of the embodied Derridean subject who may now boldly inscribe and cultivate his mind, body and world with fluidly bi-gendered qualities, meanings, and identities, seemingly safe from feminization, and secure in the knowledge that the undecidable ‘hymen’ hides a very decided dualism that persists beneath.

For, in using ‘woman’ and her sexual parts as the metaphorical source and constituents of fluidly embodied phallic subjectivity, Derrida not only perpetuates the Platonic ‘man/woman’ dualism that he purports to replace, but even more deeply and violently entrenches it, by using his feminine phallus to slice, dice, and destroy real woman, thus safely consigning her to fluid non-existence. This means that it is only the real, persistingly whole, phallic *male* body that he is and can be constructing into Derridean subjectivity, the non-existence of real sexual woman being the very *condition* of that construction. Derrida confirms this view with his comment that it is only if one is *not* a woman that the very idea or process of ‘becoming woman’ makes sense (cited in Grosz, 1990, p. 102). He is therefore attributing to ‘man’ an essentially whole, self-motivated, and therefore

---

<sup>27</sup> The ‘apotropaic power’ of an object or symbol is its capacity to ward off evil.

constructible material form (or referent), but denying one to 'woman'; a denial made clear when, reiterating Nietzsche, Derrida says,

There is no such thing as the essence of woman because woman averts, she is averted of herself. Out of the depths, endless and unfathomable, she engulfs and distorts all vestige of essentiality, of identity, of property... There is no such thing as the truth of woman, but it is because of the abyssal divergence of the truth, because that untruth is 'truth'. (1979, p. 51)

It seems, therefore, that Derrida's *anti-essentialist* deconstruction of language, meaning and subjectivity implicitly and necessarily relies upon the ontologically *essentialist* assumption that a male anatomy pre-destines one for symbolic construction and representation as subject, while a female anatomy precludes it; an assumption based on the same bias that moved Plato to grant a soul/essence to man, but not to woman. In both cases, woman constitutes the (phallically fixed but also fluidly mutable) immanent female *form* of man's ultimately transcendent, divinely unified, male essence. For, as the (renewable) feminine phallus that man cannot lose, Derrida's 'woman' is the material-linguistic *essence (logos-Logos)* that ensure exclusive self and symbolic (re)construction, recognition and representation of his organically whole phallic body into fixed but also (hierarchically) bi-gendered, multiply identified subjectivity. It is perhaps for this reason that Derrida (and other deconstructionist/poststructuralist theorists) would want to insist that there *is* no extra-symbolic material reality, no fixed, persisting essence, and no singularly enduring philosophical subject and creator of language, meaning and text. For, to admit as much would reveal the necessary essentialism underpinning his metaphysics, language and subjectivity. He remains safe in that deception (and its precariously suspended castration) however, only so long as real sexual woman remains fragmentedly non-existent. Only so long, that is, as she does not return from the distant (hellish) abyss of formless, fluidly uncontrollable will and desire, to be and represent herself as an essentially wholly enformed, integrated *subject*, thereby claiming 'woman' as her name.

In arguing that Derrida's anti-essentialist view of language and subjectivity necessarily relies on a metaphysical essentialism that grants an essence to man but not to woman, this genealogy of pro- and anti-essentialist theories comes to an end that (like the mythic serpent) reconnects with its beginnings in Platonic and Aristotelian essentialism. For, despite its problematic association with notions of biological determinacy and universality, it seems that even anti-essentialist theorists continue to implicitly assume and rely on some



kind of *essence* that underpins and enduringly forms reality and our constructions and representations of it. Could it be, then, that our metaphysical, epistemological and linguistic theories simply cannot do without some form of essence if they are to accurately and coherently represent the nature of reality, subjectivity, language, truth and knowledge? If so, then it is not the notion of essence *per se* that is precluding this coherence, but its historical *misconception* and *misuse*. In the next chapter, I examine the ways in which Plato and Aristotle's conception of essence was shaped and distorted by the patriarchy of their time, and the ways in which this *misconception* becomes further distorted by (and distorting of) subsequent metaphysical theories as the genealogy unfolds. I then relate this misconceived essence to recent, seemingly irreconcilable feminist pro- and anti-essentialist theories of metaphysics, epistemology and subjectivity, in order to argue finally for the existence of and need to recognize a real, sexually differentiated *spirogenetic* essence, in order to construct accurate and coherent models of subjectivity, language and knowledge.

## **Chapter 3**

### ***Rethinking Essence and Subjectivity***

In the preceding genealogy that traces the philosophical development of the notion of essence in relation to pro- and anti-essentialist theories of reality, knowledge and language, I argued that, since *anti-essentialist* theory appears to assume and depend upon a form of metaphysical essentialism (albeit biased and distorted), it seems that our metaphysical, epistemological and linguistic theories simply cannot do without *some* form of essence. Thus, what is impeding the construction of an accurate and consensual metaphysics is not the notion of essence *per se*, but rather, its history of misconception. In this chapter, I outline the source, the means, and the various manifestations of that misconception, before then attempting to reconceive Aristotle's notion of essence in a way that remedies that misconception, thereby creating the basis for a more accurate and coherent theory of reality, subjectivity, language and knowledge.

### **Deconstructing Essence**

In proposing a dualistic view of reality as composed of two separate substances, both Plato and Aristotle posited a fixed immaterial essence or *form* as the first cause of the existence and nature of living beings, this essence also providing the fixed meaning of the linguistic term representing that being and its natural kind. It was the perceivable, knowable, definable presence of this immaterial essence that therefore provided the metaphysical foundation for the logical inference of universal knowledge of the nature of reality, including, for Plato, notions of absolute beauty, truth and goodness. But where Plato posited perfect, immaterial, otherworldly Forms, to be known only by the pure, transcendentally rational minds of men, and of which material beings are simply the transient, imperfect, shadow-like copies, Aristotle saw that Plato's theory was unable to explain, firstly, *how* these fixed otherworldly forms cause not only the fixed, persistingly same existence, but also the self-motivated movement, growth and change of living beings, and secondly, how we can have knowledge of distant immaterial Forms but not of proximate material objects. Aristotle's solution to these problems was to reconceive immaterial essence/soul and material body as one substantial unity, with the whole, immutable essence being the *first, efficient* and *final cause* of the therefore essentially motivated form and function of otherwise inert, fluidly unbounded matter. The Aristotelian

essence is therefore primarily a life producing essence of the individual (man) that also manifests the universal (species) essence (Man).

The essential form of a thing is not only the first cause of its being and becoming, but is also its primary mode of *presentation* to the gaze of another. For, as Aristotle states, it is the persistingly unified substantial form (*ousia*) of a living thing by which it is perceived and known for what it is (*Metaphysics VII*, 1028a). Therefore, any essential *properties* employed to identify, classify and define individuals as members of a species must always be seen as secondary to, dependent upon, and thus always defined in relation to the whole essence/form that is metaphysically, linguistically and epistemically prior to them. It is through the (repeated) observation of the whole, substantial form and self-actualizing ways of being, functioning, acting and relating that one may intuitively perceive, define, classify, and thus know the essential, logically structured form and function of the individual and its species according to Aristotle's logical categories of being (e.g. form, quality, quantity, relation, place, time, position, etc.). This means that, for Aristotle, things *are* not and *cannot* be initially perceived as disorganized bundles of properties or sense data, to be then synthesized into a whole form/idea by the consciously intuitive, rational mind (as Locke, Kant, Husserl, and Russell theorized). Rather, the observer immediately perceives a living thing as a persistingly unified, organized organism that, in 'keeping on being what it is', stands out from its surroundings as the immediately and persistingly *whole* object of attention (Sachs, 2006, §9).

Sally Haslanger (2000, §4) identifies some other key features of Aristotelian essences and their substantial forms when she says,

one of the traditional characteristics of substances is that substances do not have opposites, i.e., there is no opposite of horse (non-horse does not count as an opposite) This is in contrast to many qualities: long/short, inside/outside, loud/quiet. ...[As a substance] you are a member of the kind or not and there is no middle ground: you are a horse or you aren't. (Because there is no opposite or contrary to horse, the only negative option a contradictory.)

Essential substances or natural kinds such as 'horse' or 'man' can have no opposite or contrary, in the way that 'long' is opposed to 'short', and 'inside' to 'outside', for example. Their only negative alternative is the *contradictory* 'non-horse' or 'non-man', each denoting the set into which all things that are 'not a horse' and 'not a man' are placed

respectively. Thus, whereas opposing (or contrary) properties - such as 'tall/short', 'dark/light' or 'rational/irrational' - are connected by a middle that allows their fluidly alternating expression, under Aristotle's law of the excluded middle, a natural kind (A) and its contradiction ( $\sim A$ ) have no middle ground: one is either a 'man' or a 'non-man'. All substantial beings placed in the contradictory category of 'non-man', however, must (according to logical law) have their own positively defined, essential form and function. Thus, 'Horse' and 'Tiger', for example, as contradictories of 'Man', also have - and are to be recognized and known by - their own self-subsisting essential form/categories of being and becoming, therefore situating Aristotelian essence as the source not only of fixed persisting *sameness*, but also of fixed universal *difference* of form.

The epistemological advantages of Aristotle's metaphysical and linguistic essentialism can now be summarized. Firstly, his unification of form and matter within the one composite substance (seemingly) presents an *empirically* based, *rationally* ordered method for the attainment of knowledge about the essential (individual/universal) nature of real human and non-human beings. Secondly, his notion of an essence-based substantial being allows the physical world to be conceived and perceived as having an enduringly fixed, integrated structure, but also, as always fluidly moving, developing, and adapting, and therefore able to undergo *non-essential* change due to either self-imposed, sociolinguistic, cultural or other environmental influences and inscriptions. Thirdly, because the essential form of an individual is identical to (and defined by) that of its species, the essentially whole, fixed *sameness* within a species produces the essential *difference* between species that makes recognition, classification, and knowledge of that sameness possible. And finally, Aristotle's logical requirement that things be perceived and defined in the first instance as essentially whole forms means that, whatever *nominal* properties are subsequently ascribed to a thing (or its species) must be based upon the definition of its essential form (and function) in order to count as knowledge of that thing. Further, whatever essential property may be predicated of a thing (thereby grouping that thing with other similarly predicated things), the nature of that property can be truly defined and known only in *relation* to the whole form and other essential properties of that thing. There are, however, several anomalies within this Platonic/Aristotelian conception of essence that also mark it as the first in a trail of misconceptions.

### *The Metaphysical Misconception of Essence*

As stated in Chapter 2, both Plato and Aristotle deny a soul/essence to woman, conceiving her as simply a soulless, will-less “deformed male” (1953, §25); the fluid matter into which ‘active’ man plants the seed (or essence) that passes to his son. Because existence requires enduring form, woman’s only real existence can be as the material, female aspects or *property* of man’s prior, wholly self-subsisting (phallic) being, and, as such, she is defined as the negative, inferior, *objectified* side of a ‘male/female’ opposition that installs man as its sole essential *subject*, and divides his essential and accidental properties between these hierarchically valued, mutually exclusive opposites. Or, as de Beauvoir puts it,

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him; she is not regarded as an autonomous being...she is simply what man decrees; thus she is called “the sex,”...For him she is sex - absolute sex, no less. (1953, p. 16)

With woman reduced to his passive, submissive, sexual property (or ‘Other’), man achieves seemingly autonomous existence and definition as the only whole, ensouled, transcendently rational, human subject. But what de Beauvoir fails to recognize, however, is that this Platonic/Aristotelian conception of ‘man’ as transcendent subject *depends* upon ‘woman’ being dually conceived as *either* the proper, pure, passively controlled - *or* the improper, unbounded, and thus demonically uncontrollable - material aspect of man’s immanent soul. As such, she *cannot* be constructed as subject. For, as revealed in the genealogy, the (improper) unrestrained, sinfully sexual female body represents the dark, watery depths of forbidden, feared concupiscent desire that, for pro- and anti-essentialist philosophers alike, threatens the loss of phallic form, and thus the downfall and death of man’s soul, and that must therefore be repressively subdued or sublimated. And it is only because real woman is conceived as formless fluidity that real man can be conceived as alone capable of active transcendence of that lowly female realm (Lloyd, 1984, p. 101). Real, whole woman simply *is* the dark, sexually unrestrained, potentially feminizing realm of ‘not-man’ - the clingy, fearfully engulfing “holes” and “slime” (Sartre, 1976, p. 782) - that rational ‘man’ must escape and transcend, in order to achieve enlightened, eternally informed subjectivity.

This asymmetrical, hierarchically opposed definition of the natures of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ was not simply a product of Platonic/Aristotelian imagination however, but rather,

reflected the beliefs, myths, social values and material reality of the patriarchal culture in which they lived. For example, as we have seen, Greek mythology associates the masculine god *Apollo* with light, order and restraint, and the feminine god *Dionysus* with the wildly unrestrained sexuality that, refusing godly possession and control, leads to (demonic) ‘maenadic’ madness.<sup>28</sup> In addition, the Pythagoreans, Heracliteans, and Manicheans before them associated maleness with light, unity, limit and goodness, and femaleness with darkness, plurality, the unbounded, and the bad (Guthrie, 1967, p. 36). Viewed within this context, it is not surprising that Plato associates man with perfectly pure, immaterial Form, and woman with the dark, deceitful senses and lustful desires that man must subdue and transcend so that his soul may become enlightened. But there are other, more tangible reasons for this asymmetrical conception of ‘man’ and ‘woman’. For, as Joe Sachs explains, in the ancient Greek *socius* (as now), what was seen as permanent or enduring in a man - what made him “a man of substance” - was his permanent property or “real estate”; property that is not consumed, but that, under man’s ownership and control, “breeds new wealth with no expense to itself” (2006, §3). As his wife, mother, daughter or slave, ‘woman’ represented the permanent (female) property that constituted and, for little or no cost, (re)productively augmented man’s enduring material wealth. It was the Greek term for this permanent, accumulated wealth that was the measure of the substance of a man - his ‘*ousia*’ - that Plato and Aristotle co-opted to signify the immaterial *essence* that gives enduring form to man’s substantial being.<sup>29</sup> And so, just as she had *literally* been the (virginal, maternal) property that constituted and augmented Greek man’s enduring *physical ousia*, so did ‘woman’ *figuratively* become the material property or aspect that constitutes and augments Platonic man’s enduring *metaphysical ousia* or essence (the soul incarnate). And, because the (unappropriated) sexual female body has almost universally been seen as the demonically and fatally seductive downfall of man, it is understandable that Plato would take unappropriated ‘woman’ to signify man’s dark, uncontrollable lustful desire that threatens impurity and death to his otherwise pure, perfect, immortal soul.<sup>30</sup> It is this dual (proper/improper) conception of ‘woman’, however, that is the source of the *misconception of essence* that I have posited as underpinning and undermining Western philosophy’s understandings of metaphysics, epistemology, language and subjectivity.

---

<sup>28</sup> See pages 63-65 and 71 of this thesis for the myths of Dionysus and Apollo.

<sup>29</sup> See pages 19 and 26 for reference to Plato and Aristotle’s metaphysical use of the term ‘*ousia*’.

<sup>30</sup> In *Misogyny: The Male Malady* (2001), anthropologist David Gilmour argues that almost all human cultures have perceived the sexual female body as the source of evil, impurity, disease and/or death for man.

For, in order to present a metaphysics that would support the possibility of knowledge of the existence and nature of particular forms from that of their universals (Plato), or of universal forms from the perception of their particulars (Aristotle), individual, sexuate, and species forms had to be identical. That is, the individual form ('man') had to be identical to the universal Form ('Man'). This meant that 'woman' could not have a form/essence equivalent but *different* to - and thus contradictory of - man's, but must necessarily be conceived as formless, fluid matter 'efficiently' caused, shaped and defined only by and as *part* of 'man'. For this to be possible required that 'form' be further conceived as *purely immaterial* and (actually) male, and 'matter' as fluidly formless and female, and therefore requiring definition as the (passive, purified) feminine properties of man - defined in subjugated opposition to his masculine (e.g. active, rational, dominant) properties - in order to exist. In this way, all (whole) contradictory forms within the set of 'not-man' (including horse, sheep, tree, etc.) are similarly denied their own essentially defined existence, dissolving (alongside 'woman') into what Marilyn Frye calls the "infinite, undifferentiated plenum" (1996, p. 1000), thus explaining why woman (and nature) has thereafter been "so easily associated with disorder, chaos, irrationality and impurity... There are no categories in not-man; it is a buzzing, booming confusion" (ibid.). The only existential hope for living things within that realm is to receive ordered, controlled definition as the subjugated, purified *property* of the sole human, male subject. In conceiving essence and matter in this way, Aristotle must disregard the (Heraclitean) possibility that matter may have its own ordered, intelligible *logos*, and consequently, the possibilities that woman may have her own sexually and individually differentiated essence, and that essence may therefore be an immaterial *and* material source of individual and sexuate difference, as well as sameness. To do so, he defies his own logical law that contradictories (within 'not-man') must have and be defined by their own essential form, along with his laws regarding essential categories and opposites.

In reducing real, whole woman to a fixed set of opposingly defined female properties of the essentially whole form of man, and by misapplying the law of excluded middle, Aristotle hierarchically and mutually exclusively *opposes* what were his originally *non-oppositional* causes and categories of being (such as formal vs. material causes; active vs. passive categories), under the falsely opposed subheadings of 'male' and 'female' (properties). Further, as Haslanger (2000, §4) notes, he attaches normally *fluidly opposed* essential properties such as 'rational-irrational', and *coexistent* essential properties such as

‘rational’ and ‘emotional’ to these subheadings, thereby fixedly, hierarchically, and mutually exclusively defining them in what is a further contradiction of the rules of Aristotelian logic. It is not just *essential* causes, categories and properties that are illogically misconceived, however. For the (mis)opposed concepts of ‘male’ and ‘female’ become even more tightly locked into mutually exclusive, gendered, property-based definition through the separation of *nonessential* opposites or contraries that are - but should not logically be - fixedly and hierarchically divided by an excluded middle that should lawfully apply only to the definition of whole substances. Thus, normally nonessential, fluidly contiguous properties such as ‘superior/inferior’, ‘light/dark’, and ‘pure/impure’ are reconceived as essential, hierarchical and mutually exclusively opposed properties of male and female, thus completing the transformation of these originally non-opposing terms into two hierarchically and mutually exclusively defined bundles of properties. With these transgressions of his laws of binary logic, Aristotle misconceives essence in a way that installs man as sole perceiving, knowing subject now equipped with the (il)logical binary definitions with which to perceive, appropriate, define and control the otherwise fluidly impure realm of formlessly female bodies.

For, in denying woman her own essence, and reductively and dually conceiving her as the (proper) good, male-defined, or (improper) evil, unbounded material aspect of man as the only essential subject, the rest of the physical world becomes defined and thus exists only in perceptual relation to, and as the fixed material properties of, his essential form. Thus, whilst the active *formal*, *final* and *effective* causes of man’s essential being are conceived as male, woman and the natural world are its passive *material* cause, man thus being the origin, designer, and motivator of woman/nature’s passively subjugated existence. For, as Aristotle says, “the female, as female, is passive, and the male, as male, is active, and the principle of the movement comes from him” (1953, §21). In this way, man’s originally whole essence becomes fixedly and illogically divided in a way that prepares it for numerous further divisions and methods for the perception and knowledge of its immaterial form and fixed material properties. And, as the material aspect of that essence, woman’s nature becomes dually (and morally) misconceived as either a fragmented bundle of its virtuously restrained, material properties, or else, as its dark, chaotic, naturally determined, (demonically) uncontrollable fluidity.



By (mis)conceiving essence in this way, Aristotle seemingly achieves the conditions and justification required for knowledge of its individual and universal form. For, with woman/nature only an aspect of man's essence, the essential form of individual 'man' becomes identical not only with that of all 'men', but also with that of the entire human species 'Man', thus conferring on this essence the universal, homogenized (male) *sameness* that justifies and enables the (intuitive) perception and knowledge of a universal essence through the (sense) perception of its individual instances. This does not mean, however, that Aristotle does not recognize the differences that distinguish one individual man from another - Callias from Socrates, for example. He does, but then attributes these substantial differences to variations in the *material* (female) aspect of man's essential nature (Witt, 1989, p. 178). In this way, Aristotle therefore preserves the identity between the whole, individual essence of 'man', and the whole essence of the entire human species 'Man', thereby completing his misconception of essence as a (fixedly divided) source of individual, sexuate, and species *sameness*. But, despite these misconceptions, this notion of essence retains its capacity to not only fixedly determine the essential form and properties, but also motivate the existence, growth, change, and movement of a substantial (male) being. For even fixed, enduring *sameness* of form requires constant activity to maintain it, as Aristotle notes when he says of the motivating soul,

Hence the psychic power which we are now studying may be described as that which tends to maintain whatever has this power in it of continuing such as it was, and food helps it to do its work. That is why, if deprived of food, it must cease to be. (*On the Soul*, 1941, Bk.II, Pt.4)

Hence, it is not the notion of essence *per se* that is the source of universal sameness, natural/biological determinacy, and fixed, unchanging properties, but rather, the various misconceptions outlined above that have characterized essence as an immaterial, male preserve, and reduced woman/nature to its fixed, subordinate (potentially demonic) female aspect. It is not essence, therefore, but this dualized (pure/impure) misconception of 'woman' that has underpinned and justified her historical subjugation and oppression, a justification that Aristotle reinforces when expressing the need for man's 'pure' seed to purify woman's sexually 'impure' menstrual blood,

For the catamenia are semen not in a pure state but in need of working up, as in the formation of fruits the nutriment is present, when it is not yet sifted thoroughly, but needs working up to purify it. Thus the catamenia cause generation mixture with the semen, as this impure nutriment in plants is nutritious when mixed with pure nutriment. (1953, §20)

As impure fluidity, woman's only hope of purity and goodness lies in her appropriation and oppositional definition as the purified, passive, material aspect of man's essential being. But, as such, woman became an obstacle not just to knowledge, but to man's very existence, that philosophers since have struggled to overcome. For what Aristotle could not explain was how the perception of man's fixed but also changeable *material*, female properties might ensure knowledge (and existence) of his essentially fixed, whole, *immaterial* individual/species form and properties. As a result, Aristotle's misconception of essence - as an immaterial, male preserve fixedly divided into opposing bundles of properties - spawned a trail of further misconceptions that, via problems such as the mind/body, monism/dualism, and essentialism/constructivism debates, have shaped and obstructed traditional and feminist philosophies. It is by following this trail that I hope ultimately to dissolve these problems through a reconception of the notion of essence.

### **The Trail of Misconceptions**

With Aristotle's splitting of man's substantial being into two hierarchically opposed, mutually exclusive bundles of (male/female) properties, his notion of (immanent) essence came to resemble Plato's in being a male preserve, and having a *higher* rational, male aspect, and a *lower* female, material aspect or set of properties. Similarly, it is the highest male aspect - the prime or unmoved mover - that signifies immortal, immaterial perfection (of form), while the lowest female aspect - the fluidly de-formed, (sinfully) sexual body - signifies material imperfection, impurity, badness, and even non-existence. This misconceived essence was therefore the perfect metaphysical answer to St. Augustine's prayers, in appearing to offer the metaphysical and epistemic means to know and overcome evil and procure absolute goodness and immortality for the soul. For it permitted and supported the logical recognition of an omnipotent, intentional, authoritative *God* as the transcendentally and immutably *perfect* and thus immortal (male) *form* of man's immanent soul, with woman logically reduced to its 'proper/improper' material aspect, and the serpentine *Satan* threatening the fatally feminized 'Fall' of that soul. With these ingredients, the soul's attainment of a perfect, immortal form became a matter of controlling and ultimately transcending its (dual) female, material aspect - its weak will and (potentially sinful) carnal appetites - so as to achieve union with, and to receive and embody the *Logos* of, the eternal and omnipotent Father. For, to succumb to 'Eve-il' lust

for Satan's phallic fruit meant the deforming, feminizing fall of that soul into the fires of Hell (akin to Greek mythology's *Hadean* realm of *Tartarus*), there to melt into formless fluidity within the torturous flames of depraved but insatiable desire.<sup>31</sup>



Figure 1: *La Face Cachées des Fesses* [*The Hidden Side of the Bottom*] (Pochon, 2009)

This ecclesiastically embellished, moralized, misconception of man's essence as innately sinful and imperfect, redeemed only through baptismal purification, naming, and ongoing eucharistic submission (or penance) to an immaterial, pedagogical Father, set the foundation for subsequent (pro- and anti-essentialist) reconceptions of essence, as outlined in the genealogy. This Augustinian understanding of essence may be diagrammatically represented as follows:

---

<sup>31</sup>*Tartarus* is the lowest region of Hades – the underworld of the dead. Crossing the river of death, it is to this fiery realm that sinful souls are banished, to be eternally tantalized with unattainable objects of desire.

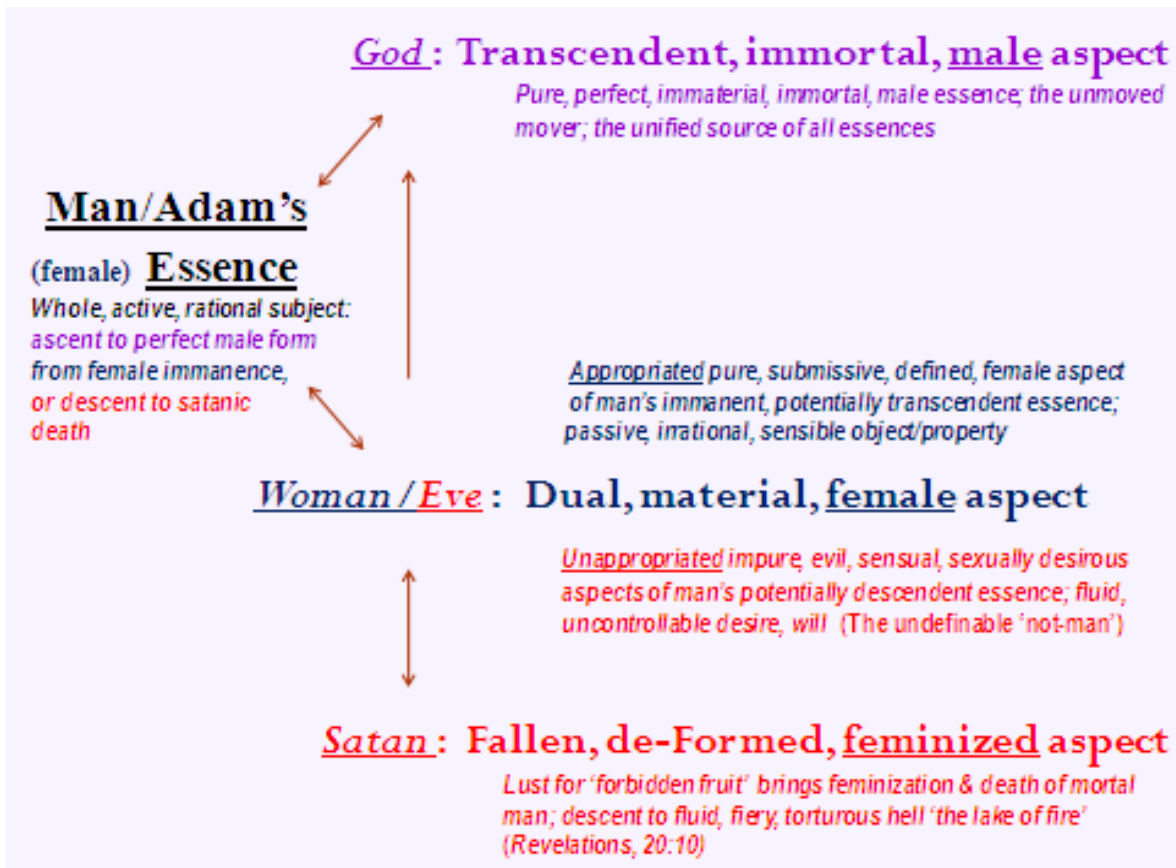


Figure 2: The Essence of Man

In this diagram, 'God' represents the highest (immortally male) aspect, and 'Satan', the lowest (fatally feminized) aspect of Man/Adam's essence, while the dually conceived 'Woman/Eve' represents its ambivalently female, material will and desires. That is, her pure, proper, rationally restrained aspect represents man's virtuous desire to (spiritually) bow to the (phallicizing) will and Word of God; her impure, improper, uncontrolled aspect representing his forbidden desire to (physically) bow to the (feminizing) will and sexual body of Satan. It is this diagram, then, that also dissolves the paradox of *Diotima*.<sup>32</sup> For, whilst (sinful) *Eve* represents its impurely sexual, *material* aspect, *Diotima* is the pure, chaste, rationally receptive, immanent soul/mind of man that, in receiving God's knowledge of absolute truth, beauty, and goodness, ultimately ascends to and assumes His perfect, immortal form. Thus, only as man's rational soul (or *Psyche*) may woman be wise.<sup>33</sup> Using this explication of Augustine's further (and now God-ordained)

<sup>32</sup> See page 21 for Plato's reference to the 'wisewoman' *Diotima* - an apparent paradox in that Plato denies a soul to woman, thereby denying her the ability to know or be wise.

<sup>33</sup> The femaleness of man's immanent mind/soul finds further mythological support in the Greek figure of *Psyche*, the female personification of the immanent human soul, and *Sarasvati*, the Hindu (father-born) goddess of wisdom.

misconception of essence, it is now possible to show how subsequent, even more distorting reconceptions follow from it.

In what Bordo calls a “flight from the feminine” (1987, p. 5), Descartes seeks to radically separate the innately sinful Augustinian soul/essence from the source of its seemingly inescapable imperfection - its (dual) sensible, material (female) aspect - in order to present the mind as the indubitable foundation for knowledge and thus control of the physical world. In reconceiving mind and body as distinct substances, each motivated by its own essence, Descartes conceives the human body as a machine that, like a “well-made clock” (1968, p. 163), is a naturally ordered, instinctively driven, unfeeling assemblage of essential parts that may, however, become disordered (due to its unruly senses), causing disturbing passions to arise in the mind. To avert this threat, the pure, femininely submissive mind must open itself to receiving (divine) *a priori* knowledge of the essential (spatial) properties of the natural body, thus ascending to a transcendent state of “forceful, potent and virile” masculine subjectivity (Keller, 1985, p. 38) from where to project and subdue his dangerous passions via the penetrating subjugation, dissection, and logical definition of the natural (female) body. For the transcended Cartesian subject, then, the unfettered natural body that (at first sight) presents as an unknowable source of wonder must be reduced to the (femininely) subjugated object of his possession, knowledge and control (lest demonic passions erupt). Thus, with his bifurcation and purification of (immaterial, male) essence, Descartes seemingly reinforces the Platonic/Augustinian ‘logic of male homophobia’, thereby defusing the Cartesian subject’s fear of feminization. The problem with this further misconception, however, is that the male subject’s seemingly safe, autonomous, wholly formed existence actually *depends* upon his certain knowledge and constant control of a natural (demonically female) realm which therefore continues to threaten that existence, especially with Descartes’ failure to explain just how the *immaterial* mind might even act upon a *material* body. Hence, with his subsequent failure to produce the scientific knowledge required for control, it became the urgent quest of the now solipsistically isolated philosophical subject to found, justify and obtain knowledge/control of the natural female realm, for his own survival. Along with the mind/body problem, the other problems impeding that quest (e.g. other minds; freewill vs. determinism; monism vs. dualism; physicalism vs. spiritualism) can be seen to result from Descartes’ misconception of essence.

For, with the Cartesian subject isolated not only from the natural world but also from other (possibly demonic) male minds, knowledge of the existence of the latter becomes a matter of assumption based on identity. Because only men have a mind, he can only *assume* that all other men have minds too. And, because his soul is characterized by *free will*, and his ontologically distinct body naturally *determined*, it becomes inconceivable to Cartesian man that free will and determinism might be able to coexist within one unified being, without contradiction. Similarly, the questions underlying the unresolved ‘monism/dualism’ and ‘physicalism/spiritualism’ debates - Is reality composed of one substance or two? And, if one, is it physical or spiritual? - assume the Cartesian view of mind and body as distinct substances, with each one therefore incapable of manifesting the other. For, only if the transcendent (male) mind, finally purified of its material (female) properties, is conceived as *incapable* of manifesting even a trace of materiality, can reality be logically conceived as *either* one substance *or* two, and not as always (and non-contradictorily) both. With these problems hampering the attainment of knowledge of real physical bodies, it is unsurprising that Locke, Kant, Husserl and Kripke would look to Descartes’ opposingly and objectively (re)defined *phenomenal* objects as their basis and justification for knowledge.

Within their empiricist and subjective idealist theories, Descartes’ (knowable) natural, mechanical essence - reconceived as Locke’s real microstructural essence, and later, as Kant’s thing-in-itself - becomes unknowable, as the solipsistic subject takes Aristotle’s efficient/spatiotemporal categories and properties of being out of the real, natural world and into his own conscious mind. Here he uses them to logically construct, nominally define, know, and thus control *phenomenal* objects (or appearances) as the ‘proper’ manifestations of his sensible perceptions, intentions and ‘improper’ desires. With Husserl’s relocation of the external (essential) thing-in-itself into the conscious, intentionally perceiving mind, to be the *knowable* ideal limit of its logically synthesized appearances, these phenomenal objects and their nominal essences attain a seemingly real existence, albeit only within the Husserlian subject’s mind. With his subsequent projection of these realized appearances outside the limits of the conscious mind that enformed them, and Kripke’s later grounding of their essential phenomenal form/properties in a (Lockean) real, *perceivable*, microstructural essence, the solipsistic subject seemingly achieves the essential basis and justification for knowledge and control of *apparently real* phenomenal bodies needed to ensure his (divinely authorized) subjective existence. This foundation is

undermined, however, by the inescapable need to use sense data as the base ingredients for phenomenal objects, thus thwarting the transcendent subject's complete escape from *actually real*, fearfully unrestrained, natural (female/feminized) bodies. It is this now twice bifurcated real/phenomenal essence, as it fixedly subjugates and defines his/the feared, alienated, natural female body, that the (supposedly) anti-essentialist subject reclaims so as to escape his solipsistic isolation, but in a way that also averts the demonic Fall.

Schopenhauer's first move in reclaiming his real/phenomenal physical (female) properties is to reunite the Kantian logically defined phenomenal object with the *real*, natural thing-in-itself; appearance and object are just two sides of the same coin, and that coin is the fluid, ordinary thing-in-itself - the conscious subject's irrational, blindly impulsive, sexual 'Will-to-live' that is the fundamental principle of existence. Because it is the Will of the (male) subject that unceasingly creates and unsatisfyingly consumes his natural/phenomenal (female) object world, subject and object are one, man's only escape from the torment of (forbidden or unsatisfying) phenomenal objects being through ascetic detachment from, and aesthetic transcendence of his lustful will. And, for Schopenhauer, it is 'woman' that symbolizes this natural, fluidly primordial, but also "sinful, reprehensible" *will* that, as for Heraclitus, is the (impure) source, the (purified) objectified form, and also the fluid demise of the consciously (re)embodied male subject. Thus, in effecting this reunification of the (male) mind and his (female) body, Schopenhauer marks the Cartesian natural, mechanical body as *male* (woman being its fluid, maternal source), and unites it with its Cartesian mind-subjugated and opposingly redefined phenomenal properties, so that man's naturally impulsive, sinfully sexual (childishly female) body/will gives rise to, and is then subjugated into artificial (feminine, object) form by, his transcendently male mind/soul.

While miserable Schopenhauerian man strove to ascetically *suppress* and spiritually transcend his unruly female will to ensure the soul's immortality, Nietzsche sought instead to actively and aesthetically *sublimate* this will through the passionately embodied use of poetry, parody, and metaphor and their always fluid meanings to construct and reinscribe the natural (male) body with ever-changing forms of subjectivity and identity. In this way, the Cartesian boy's femininely submissive will manifests as the metaphorical objects with which the Zarathustrian warrior/man aesthetically expresses, cultivates, controls, and ultimately transcends this always threatening will (finding unity and immortality in the

*soma* of the gods), Nietzsche thereby perpetuating Schopenhauer's fusion of (Cartesian) apparent and natural (female) essences.<sup>34</sup>

Derrida, however, seeks, not transcendent, but earthly immortality, to be achieved through the 'stylish' cultivation of the boyishly submissive body/will into phallically fixed, unified, bi-gendered subjectivity, thereby shielding himself - as parrying, penetrating, self-rebirthing textual warrior/subject - from the threat of castrated feminization and death. As the feminine phallus/*logos* that is the creator and protector of that subjectivity, it is 'woman' and her chaste female/feminine body that are to be Derrida's *soma*, the following reworking of Derrida's (1998) and Grosz' (1990) explication<sup>35</sup> of his deconstructive strategies revealing the fixed phallic essentialism achieved via these supposedly anti-essentialist steps: Derrida uplifts the (Cartesian) bundle of essential, opposingly defined, feminine properties (the subjugated body) and thrusts it (back) into the heart of the whole, masculine mind, taking the virginal *hymen* (not the impure will/woman) as the fluidly 'undecidable' source of metrosexual man's (hierarchically) bi-gendered subjectivity, and making (pure) 'woman' metaphor for the veiled 'style' - the imperforate feminine *phallus* - that constructs and protects that enduringly unified subjectivity, and that *cannot* be lost.<sup>36</sup> Now without male-defined existence or representation, pure, hymeneal girl/woman is both the formless, fluidly undecidable, female source (the material *logos*) from which, and the feminine phallus/style (the immaterial *Logos*) with which, man is textually/seminally (re)constructed and qualified into perfectly unified, hierarchically bi-gendered, self-immortalizing subjectivity, whilst impure, sexual woman, repeatedly penetrated and destroyed by his phallic sword/pen, has no existence whatsoever. As such, she can no longer threaten as man's very 'decidable', fatal, will to submit. In thus reuniting the essentially whole, dominant Cartesian mind with its phenomenally subjugated, nominally redefined body, with the real, virginal female being the (female) source and (feminine) components of that seemingly real phallic subjectivity, 'woman' comes full circle back to her original Aristotelian definition as the proper/improper material aspects of man's essential being. The difference being that Descartes and Derrida recognize an element of natural order/structure within the vast, fluidly formless (female) plenum (an element recognized by Heraclitus, but ignored by Aristotle), with Derrida claiming that element as

---

<sup>34</sup> In Sanskrit, *Soma* is the purifying, unifying, immortalizing semen/ambrosia/wine of the gods.

<sup>35</sup> See page 76 of this thesis.

<sup>36</sup> See page 77 for explication of Derrida's (1979) use of 'woman' as metaphor for the 'style' that is the veiled, phallic pen/sword that disseminates (and thus protects the warrior subject from) feminizing desires, thereby allowing him to safely 'become feminine'.



the pure material essence (*logos*) of the body that therefore possesses the only whole, self-motivated, and thus constructible form: the phallic *male* body. Hence, with his reappropriation of the subjugated, simulated feminine, and his violent dissection and annihilation of the natural, sexual female, Derrida even more deeply and damagingly engraves the ‘man/woman’ dualism onto the notion of essence, and therefore onto real sexual (female) bodies, as his supposedly anti-essentialist strategies retain and perpetuate, in a now utterly distorted form, the (Aristotelian/Cartesian) bifurcated misconception of essence.

Having traced the Aristotelian phallogocentric misconception of essence through its ever more distorting permutations, it becomes clear why feminist philosophers such as Luce Irigaray (1985a) have worked with such urgency to conceptualize and thus re-present an embodied, female subject within language and discourse. For Irigaray realizes what other anti-essentialist feminist theorists such as Simone de Beauvoir, Judith Butler and Donna Haraway do not. When theorists such as Nietzsche and Derrida conceive of the sociolinguistic and self construction of fluidly embodied subjectivities and identities, just as when Plato conceives of the cultivated ascendance of the noble soul to transcendent perfection (of Form), they assume and depend upon the material and symbolic non-existence of woman as female *subject*. That is, their metaphysical and epistemological theorizing requires that the term ‘woman’ function not as a *name* referring to a real subjective being, but only as a symbol or metaphor, its meanings gleaned only in (inferior, propertied) relation to the *name* ‘man’. This is why Irigaray initiates a (re)conceptualization of ‘woman’ as embodied, thinking, feeling, desiring, female subject, thereby creating the foundation for a model of subjectivity and language based in real sexual difference, rather than what she sees as the “hom(m)osexual” (1985b, p. 43) sameness of traditionally phallogocentric language, discourse, and theories of subjectivity. Because it is the visible presence of the singular, erect phallus that has traditionally determined and defined the male subject, Irigaray looks to the female morphology, specifically the plurality, tactility and incompleteness of the vaginal “two lips”, as the basis for a fluidly mutable, symbolically and self-constructed female subjectivity (1985a, p. 24). Irigaray describes the development of this always-embodied subjectivity as a “sensible transcendence” that requires the cultivated restraint and refinement of base, bodily instincts, drives and impulses to achieve a self-limiting, but also fluidly transforming, always incomplete state of divinely spiritualized subjectivity. This sexually differentiated

subjectivity therefore rejects essentialist notions of an original, essentially fixed, complete, autonomously defined form, its fluid female forms shaped only in *relation* to, and as different from, the sexual morphology and function of the male body. Drawing upon Heidegger's construction of the natural world as a place/dwelling of human being (or *Dasein*), Irigaray conceptualizes the female subject as an "uncircumscribable volume" (Hirsh & Olson, 1996, np.), her fluid female body a site of "natural belonging" (2004, p. xii) that she constructs and limits as a subjective *being* or *dwelling* from which to go forth and engage with the male subject, with each one being a 'place' for but not appropriating the other. For, as she says, "Why is setting oneself up as a solid more worthwhile than flowing as a liquid from between two [lips]...My life is nothing but the mobile flexibility, tenderness, uncertainty of the fluid" (1992, pp. 18, 28).

However, in maintaining pro- and anti-essentialist associations of real (sexual) woman with unbounded *fluidity*, and the anti-essentialist denial of a (material/immaterial) real or linguistic essence, Irigaray seems to simply accept and perpetuate the various misconceptions of essence that necessarily *depend* upon the uncultivable fluidity (i.e. the formless non-existence) of real woman as the basis, and to provide the pure (material/metaphorical) properties, for their conception and cultivation of an *essentially male* subjectivity. In addition, she seemingly ignores the Derridean/Foucauldian assumption of a (Cartesian) natural, *essentially* ordered and motivated *male* body, and Derrida's use of 'woman' and her (chaste) female body as the condition and means for cultivating what can only therefore be a *male* subject. In which case, it is not the *denial* of essence that may enable the metaphysical conception and real/linguistic construction of woman as female subject, but rather, its recognition and reconception in a form that precludes the original Platonic/Aristotelian misconception, and the ever more phobically distorted logic that followed; a logic that may also now be termed the 'logic of survival' of the phallic male subject.

### **A Reconception of Essence**

Recall that Aristotle originally conceived essence (or *ousia*) as an immaterial soul that is the first cause of: i) the *existence*, ii) the enduringly whole, definable, knowable *form*, and, iii) the *functional* capacity for self-motivated change, movement, and thus, the adaptive self-actualization of all living things (or composite substances). Without essence, matter is

simply an inert, fluidly undefinable mass, and it is this (primary) essence that gives form to the individual substance (e.g. 'man') that also corresponds to the (secondary) essence that gives form to the species (e.g. 'Man'). But there is a further key feature of Aristotle's essence that then becomes obscured when he denies an essence to woman, and conceives her as the (pure/impure) material aspect of man's *ousia*. That feature appears in *On the Generation of Animals* (1953), when Aristotle says of the sexuate differences that enable reproduction,

Male and female differ in their essence by each having a separate ability or faculty, and anatomically by certain parts; essentially the male is that which is able to generate in another, as said above; the female is that which is able to generate in itself and out of which comes into being the offspring previously existing in the parent... Clearly, then, the distinction of sex is a first principle. (§2)

As Georges Duby et al. (1994) argue, Aristotle all but says here that sex (and thus, sexual difference), as an almost universal condition for procreation, is an essential form and function; both male and female have their own 'first principle' or essence, and thus contribute equally to the generation of the offspring. Having come this far, however, Aristotle quickly retreats from the metaphysical and linguistic recognition of sexually different essences by deftly turning the *qualitative* differences between male and female morphologies into *quantitative* differences (ibid. p. 67). A female, says Aristotle, is simply a deformed, undeveloped male; she has the same seminal blood as man, but because her body is cold, her blood cannot develop into mature, seed-bearing semen. Or, as he puts it, "females are weaker and colder in nature, and we must look upon the female character as being a sort of natural deficiency" (1953, §6). In this way, Aristotle's metaphysical and epistemological requirement that a genus or species essence be based on the reproduction of one individual essence is met by denying the distinct sexuate differences, and the mutual capacity for generation, that he had earlier asserted. When it comes to explaining the fixed, enduring differences between individual (male) substances, and also between individual (male) essences, however, he is unable to perform the same sleight of hand, and in fact has little to say on the matter.

Charlotte Witt (1989, p. 178) interprets Aristotle as supposing the differences between one individual *essence* and another to be due to differences in the (posterior) composite (form/matter) *substances* of the two (male) individuals, whilst differences in the composite substances are put down to differences in the *matter* of each substance. However, this

interpretation, if accurate, contradicts Aristotle's definition of the nature and relation of form and matter, in that it makes *matter* indirectly responsible for differences between individual *essences*, thereby making both composite substance *and* matter *prior*, in this respect, to essence. But if essence is the first cause of the existence, form and function of a composite substance (and its species), as Aristotle suggests, then neither substance nor matter can be prior to it in any respect whatsoever. This relationship is further complicated when, in attributing the unity of a substance (e.g. "cloak") to the putting of form ("round") into matter ("bronze"), Aristotle (1994, Z1045a, §26-35) seemingly assumes a prior, identifiable structure to matter as a condition - but not an equal cause - of that unity. In light of these anomalies, it appears that Aristotle inclined towards but resisted recognition of not just essential *sameness* - but also *difference* - of individual, sexuate, and species form(s), and a not just *immaterial*, but also *material* essence; a resistance that, in light of contemporary scientific advances, can seemingly no longer be justified.

Biological science has shown matter to indeed be a source of determinate form and function, that source indicating that if Aristotle conceives the members of a species as defined and united by a common essence/form, then he should arguably do the same for members of the same sex. That is, we now know the matter of living organisms to be largely composed of cells containing *genetic material* that passes from one generation to the next, with both male and female parents contributing equal amounts of genetic matter to their progeny. This recombined genome holds the code or 'blueprint'- the (potential) essential form, one might say - for the development and actualization of the enduringly whole, autonomously definable individual (Pai, 1984). Because it causes and motivates not just the persisting *sameness* but also the growth, change, and thus *difference* of form, this genetic code can be seen as the source of persisting sameness *and* difference in individual, sexuate and/or species form. For, whilst human cells typically have 23 pairs of chromosomes, only around 98% of that genetic material is identical in man and woman, the other 2% accounting for the differences not only between man and woman, but also between individual men, as well as between individual women. Compared with the 98% similarity, this 2% difference in male and female genetic codes may seem insufficient to warrant the recognition of sex (and sexuate difference) as essentially determined. This conclusion is challenged, however, by the further recognition that the human genetic code appears to differ from that of the chimpanzee, for example, by somewhere around 2% (Page et al., 2003). Hence, if a 2% difference in species genomes is enough to impel

Aristotle's recognition of a species-specific essence, then it is not implausible to suggest that a 2% difference in sex genomes can support recognition of a sex-specific essence.

On the basis of this argument for the association of genetic material with essence, one might conclude (as Kripke does) that it is purely the genetic material of an organism that determines its essential form and/or properties. However, as the findings of cell biologist Bruce Lipton (2001a) and other epigenetic research indicate, not only does genetic material direct and motivate the development of mind and body, but mind also directs and motivates the operations of every cell in the living organism, and particularly the operations of its genes.<sup>37</sup> As Lipton says in *Mind over Genes: The new Biology* (2007),

Earlier in my career...I actively supported the perspective that the human body was a biochemical machine 'programmed' by its genes. It is now recognized that the environment, and more specifically, our perception (interpretation) of the environment, directly controls the activity of our genes...This new perspective of human biology does not view the body as just a mechanical device, but rather incorporates the role of a mind and spirit.

Thus, neither mind nor body nor spirit of a living being can justifiably be seen as capable of a separate existence, nature, or function; neither can one be conceived as prior or superior to any other. Soul/spirit, mind and body are inextricably entwined aspects of the essentially whole, integrated form of a living being, as it manifests an inextricably material *and* immaterial essence. On this basis, Aristotle's phallogocentric notion of a perfect soul-like (male) essence that gives fixed, motivated form to otherwise inert, fluidly unbounded (female) matter can be seen as ontologically misconceived, its immateriality simply enabling the subsequent denial of that essence to woman, and her appropriation as its (pure, submissive) material manifestation. Thus, to reconceive essence as always (im)material means that all living beings, whether male or female (or both), whether human or non-human, must be seen as having, and as being caused, enformed, motivated, and thus inter-textually constructed by, their own (individual, sexuate, species) essence, an essence that, in recognizing its essential (im)materiality, may be seen and metaphysically/epistemologically rethought as a '*spirogenetic*' essence.

---

<sup>37</sup> See Szyf M, Weaver I, & Meaney M. (2007), Whitelaw (2006), and other epigenetic references listed on page 59.

Like the Aristotelian soul, the self-subsisting spirogenetic essence/form of man and woman may be conceived and defined according to his original laws of logic. As the first cause of the persistingly whole *form, function, growth, movement*, and thus *existence* of a living thing, the metaphysical and linguistic definition of this individual/universal essence is governed by the laws of ‘non-contradiction’ and ‘excluded middle’. Both boy and girl are defined as spirogenetic subjects, and so, as girl/woman’s contradictory ‘other’,<sup>38</sup> boy/man has his own essential, autonomously - but also relationally - defined subjective existence, and vice versa. And with the body being always already subjective, the development of male subjectivity can no longer be conceived as the Paternally approved, inscribed ascension from base, naturally unbounded, fluidly female embodiment to divinely transcendent, perfectly unified, enformed male subjectivity, to be thereafter protected from submissive desires through the (il)logical control/destruction of the natural female body. Rather, both boy and girl, as spirogenetically whole, integrated subjects, originally, unconditionally, and intersubjectively exist, and are therefore free to mutually perceive, recognize and love the (im)material - and thus sensibly expressible, knowable - essence/form of the ‘other’. And, because this spirogenetic essence operates at individual, sexuate and species levels, it can be conceived as being defined with diminishing specificity as the level of (whole) definition ascends from individual to species, the essential differences between individuals, for example, being overlooked in order to recognize sexuate identity, and the essential sexuate differences then overlooked to recognize species identity. At all levels, the *spirogenetic* essence exists as a primarily whole, real form/function, to be (inter)subjectively constructed, expressed, perceived, known and defined according to its various (now indivisible) Aristotelian *categories* and *properties* of being, with the cell/genetic structure of each living thing specifically related to its form. As such, it presents the metaphysical/logical foundation for a rethinking of the principles, methods and limits of traditional epistemology.

Spirogenetically reconceived, the essential nature of a living thing need no longer be seen and known as the *real* object of rational contemplation, intuition, or clear and distinct ideas, or as the mind-constructed, controlled *phenomenal* object of man’s fears, intentions and desires, or even as unknowable because imperceptible or fluidly undecidable. Because it is always (im)material and subjective, the universal definition and knowledge of this

---

<sup>38</sup>That is, under the ‘law of noncontradiction’, one can be a woman or a man, or a horse or a tiger, but not both.

essence becomes simply a matter of allowing all essentially same - but also different - subjects to express, recognize and represent their own essence and essential qualities as experienced, expressed, and conceived firstly by their own mindbody, and only in relation to themselves. In this case, the universal definition of 'woman', for example, becomes the self-identified spirogenetic (female) form and qualities that unite, are shared by, and reflect the essential selves (and matching self-concepts) of all women. And, in this way, all real, whole, essential beings become knowable, not as male-constructed, subjugated, dissected (real/apparent/metaphorical) objects or properties, but as originally essentio-socially constructed, self-knowing, self-articulating spirogenetic *subjects* of their own lives, thereby freeing the sole, solipsistic male subject from his phobic veil of pretence, to perceive a currently unimaginably different and more diverse world of living beings as they real-ly, essentially are.

Thus, having concluded from the (Ch. 2) genealogy of pro- and anti-essentialist theories that our metaphysics, language, and epistemology cannot do without some form of essence, and having then traced the historical distortions of what I have argued to be the illogical Aristotelian *misconception* of essence, I conclude, for the moment, this reconception of essence as a *spirogenetic* entity that shapes and motivates individual, sexuate and species form/function. In so doing, I am aware that I have not yet explicated just how the *immaterial* and *material* aspects of this essence may interrelate. Apart from seeing the (fixedly and fluidly) immaterial mind/soul as essentially connected with every part of the (fixedly and fluidly) material body,<sup>39</sup> I leave further exploration of this aspect until the final section of the thesis, in anticipation that the research in Section II will shed further light on the issue. This research is motivated by the possibility that, *if* this reconception of essence is plausible, then our current metaphysical and epistemological views of reality and of the development of subjectivity are distorted in a way that, through their construction and inscription of the developing mindbody, may be causing a *fragmentation* and *loss* of the originally whole essential self. Because this fragmentary loss might be expected to be much more severe in those currently conceived and constructed as the (essence-less) material, apparent, metaphorical, or otherwise non-existent aspects of the (heterosexual) male subject, it may be that this misconceived essence and distorted

---

<sup>39</sup> This conception of the mind being connected with every part of the body (rather than confined to the brain) draws on: i) epigenetic theory and research (see p. 59 & 100); ii) research suggesting that, in some (heart/liver) transplants, aspects of the donor's personality are transferred to the recipient (Pearsall, 1998); and iii) scientist Charles Birch's view that the smallest element in the physical universe may be a "feeling" or "event" (1995, p. 85).

metaphysics are creating the conditions for mental or psychosomatic disorders to occur in some girls/women. In Section II, therefore, I hypothesize and seek practical support for the existence of an originary *spirogenetic* essence and essential female self that, through its metaphysically-based familial, social and discursive (de)construction, is becoming fragmented and lost to consciousness, thereby creating a state of existential (di)stress in girls/women that, under certain further conditions, is resulting in eating and associated disorders.





## **Section II:    *Is there a Spirogenetic Essence and Essential Female Self?***

### **Chapter 4**

#### ***(Re-)Conceptions of Anorexia***

In Section I, I postulated that a possible reason for the ongoing inability of Western philosophers to reach consensus on a correct metaphysics is that pro- and anti-essentialist metaphysical (and therefore epistemological) theories since the time of Plato and Aristotle have perpetuated, and become gradually more distorted by, the latter's illogical *misconception of essence* as a wholly immaterial, male preserve. Because these theories seemingly rely on some kind of im/material essence, I hypothesized the existence of an originary *spirogenetic* essence and essential self, that is the source of the persisting sameness - but also difference and growth - of (whole) individual, sexuate and species form/function. I further hypothesized that the metaphysical, linguistic and discursive non-recognition, non-representation, and therefore, (de)construction of this essence is, under certain further conditions, resulting in some forms of mental disorder in girls/women.

In search of empirical support for this hypothesis, I carried out (at least two) in-depth interviews with ten women, five of whom presented as having experienced no (clinically or self) diagnosed mental disorder, the other five as having had previous experience of the eating disorders *anorexia*, *bulimia* or *orthorexia nervosa*.<sup>40</sup> The aim was to record the interviewees' experiences and interpretations of their own infant/adolescent processes of development of female selfhood, looking specifically at the ways in which the (concept/image of) self - particularly the *sexual* self - was shaped by and within familial, social and discursive relationships, and in particular, the mother/daughter relationship. The further aim was to then see whether and in what ways the interviewees perceived these processes of development of the sexual female self (and associated changes in self-concept/percept) as being related to the onset of their eating disorder. Empirical data indicating the development and socio-linguistic construction of the sexual female self to have been (experienced as) a process of degradation, fragmentation, alienation, or other

---

<sup>40</sup>*Orthorexia* was first defined and diagnosed in 1997 by Steven Bratman M.D. as the fanatical and unhealthy obsession with the preparation and eating of healthy foods, an obsession that socially isolates the individual, and in which food is eaten, not for pleasure, but for virtue.

form of loss of a previously whole, integrated, subjective being (along with associated motivations, functions and abilities) were taken as evidence for the existence of an originary female (spirogenetic) essence and essential self; a self that, in being denied metaphysical/symbolic recognition and representation, becomes divided, fragmented, and possibly destroyed by its socio-symbolic (de)construction.

This research was motivated by the fact that, despite it being around 150 years since the clinical recognition and classification of *anorexia nervosa* as a nervous disorder, and despite the plethora of theories concerning its genealogy, etiology and treatment, the number of girls and women diagnosed with *anorexia* (and *bulimia*) has steadily - and more recently, *rapidly* - increased within Western (and westernised) modern and postmodern societies and cultures since the nineteenth century.<sup>41</sup> A review of the recent literature shows that, since physicians William Gull and Charles Lasègue classified *anorexia* in the 1870s as an hysteria-based disorder of the nervous or digestive systems, it has variously been perceived as having a biomedical, a psychological, a psychosexual, a sociological, a cultural, and most recently, a biopsychosocial etiology or cause (Bruch, 1974, Brumberg, 1988; Gordon, 2000; Lyon *et al*, 2005). Generally perceived as the pathological refusal of food over a period of months or years, *anorexia* is more specifically and currently defined in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-IV-TR) as involving: i) a refusal to maintain normal body weight leading to a weight less than 85% of that expected for age and height; ii) an intense fear of gaining weight or becoming fat; iii) a disturbed experience of body weight or shape; and iv) *amenorrhoea* (menstrual cessation) for at least three months. Whilst *anorexia* is commonly associated with several other physiological and psychological abnormalities (e.g. endocrine disorder, stunted growth, *anaemia*, reduced immunity, decreased libido, perfectionism, distorted body image, depression, and obsessive-compulsive behaviour), as Joan Brumberg (1988) notes, the disorder has also historically and generally been associated with young, white girls/women within the middle or upper social classes of "developed" Western countries (p. 27). Along with the large number and diversity of symptoms and the resultingly wide range of theories around the etiology of *anorexia*, the increasing incidence of the disorder has given rise to a "veritable army of health professionals involved in the

---

<sup>41</sup> Whether there has been an increase in the incidence of *anorexia* and *bulimia* during the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, or simply an increase in recognition and diagnosis, is a matter of ongoing debate. In reviewing the arguments, Gordon (2000, p. 68) concludes that the evidence weighs in favour of an actual and marked increase in incidence and also prevalence of the disorders.

treatment of eating disorders” (ibid. p. 20) including psychiatrists, clinical psychologists, endocrinologists, neurobiologists, general practitioners, social workers, family therapists, dieticians, nurses and carers. The subsequent need to localize and organize this army has resulted in the establishment of a number of treatment centres in the United States, the U.K., Australia and New Zealand - the *Oak House* (Melbourne) and *Ashburn Clinic* (Dunedin) being two examples of current residential facilities focused on researching and treating eating disorders. However, despite the large amount of resources and personnel devoted to researching these disorders, along with the growing array of therapeutic methods deployed in their treatment, the reported incidence of *anorexia/bulimia* has continued to grow during the last fifty years to what are now seen by some as *epidemic* proportions (Bruch, 1978; Gordon, 1990; Bordo, 1993). With *anorexia* having a mortality rate of around 15-20% (the risk of successful suicide being 32 times greater than that expected for the same-aged population in general<sup>42</sup>), the failure of health professionals to stabilize - let alone reduce - its occurrence, along with the general failure to successfully treat the disorder (some treatments even being seen to exacerbate it<sup>43</sup>), is producing an alarming situation, suggesting current theories of the cause and nature of *anorexia* to be inadequate. It is in order to understand if and why this may be the case that I now review the various biomedical, psychological, psychoanalytic, and (feminist) sociological and cultural theories of *anorexia nervosa*.

### *A Genealogy of ‘Anorexia/Bulimia Nervosa’*

First described in late nineteenth century medical literature as a nervous disorder affecting young women within higher social classes, *anorexia nervosa* was the term coined by English physician William Gull (1874) for what he saw as a form of ‘hysteria’ or ‘perversions of the ego’ in which nervous anxieties were expressed as somatic symptoms in which the patient’s persistent refusal of food led to severe emaciation and cessation of menstruation, often accompanied by states of hyperactivity. But, contrary to the historical use of the term ‘hysteria’ to refer to the mental and physical effects of a ‘wandering’ (demonically possessed) uterus,<sup>44</sup> Gull saw the self-starvation of *anorexia* as the result of hysterical mental states caused by a disorder of the central nervous system. Choosing to

---

<sup>42</sup> See Beumont (2007).

<sup>43</sup> See Lapp and LeCroy (2006, p. 113) who argue that Cognitive Behavioural Therapy may even exacerbate *anorexia* by intensifying the anorectic’s attention on, and thus identification with, her disorder.

<sup>44</sup> The term ‘hysteria’ originates from the Greek ‘*hystera*’ or uterus, and Hippocrates’ belief that a ‘dry’ uterus could rise up into a woman’s chest and suffocate her, causing fainting, fits, and madness.

focus on medical symptoms rather than mental causes, Gull's treatment for *anorexia* required regular feeding of patients by "persons who would have moral control over them", food refusal no longer an option for patients who would, if necessary, be force fed (ibid. pp. 22-26). Other physicians of the time, however, recommended not only forced oral feeding, but also, failing this, rectal feeds (Silverman, 1997, p. 5). Whilst French physician Charles Lasègue (1873) also viewed *anorexia* as a form of *hysteria*, he related it to the "gastric centre" rather than the nervous system, and interpreted the emotional disturbances underlying food refusal as a result of *intrafamilial* conflict between the maturing girl and her parents, rather than an internal psychopathology (p. 265). Pressured to take on the prescribed mode of 'proper', self-restrained femininity in the hope of securing an advantageous marriage (thereby enhancing the family's position), the anorexic girl's refusal of food allowed the expression of emotional turmoil in a quiet, reserved, ladylike way that "honoured the emotional guidelines governing the middle-class Victorian family" (Brumberg, 1988, p. 140), whilst also drawing the attention and concerns of those around her. However, whilst Gull and Lasègue listed the primary somatic symptoms and suggested their psychological origins, neither could pinpoint an exact and common cause of *anorexia*, a cause that would also explain why the disorder occurred in some girls and not others. Thus, as Hilde Bruch (1974) says of the theorizing that followed Gull and Lasègue's classification of *anorexia* as a psychological disorder, "The contradiction and confusion in the literature that has accumulated during these 100 years is considerable" (p. 217).

In critiquing Gull's view of *anorexia*, obstetrician William Playfair (1888) diagnosed it as a kind of "neurasthenia" or nervous exhaustion, a new neurotic disease generated by nineteenth century industrialization, scientific progress, and the emancipation of women. For Playfair, any treatment of *anorexia* would fail if it did not include isolation from family and social pressures. And so, virtually ignoring etiology, 19<sup>th</sup> century physicians such as Playfair, Silas Weir Mitchell, and Stephen Mackenzie designed and instituted treatment regimes for *anorexia* that uniformly took the gaining of a reasonable *weight* to indicate that the disorder had been cured. While a vast number of therapeutic methods were therefore devised to alleviate the primary symptom of emaciation, as Joan Brumberg notes, "medical men never sought to explain, from the girl's perspective, why she did not eat" (ibid. p. 163). A possible reason for this omission may be that feminine sickness and debility were the general fashion amongst bourgeois Victorian women; or, as Brumberg puts it, "(w)asting was in style" (ibid. p. 171), and feminine beauty meant thinness, frailty,

and a visible *lack* of appetite, whether for air, food or sex. Thus, the most purely feminine and thus desirable young woman was she who, through rigid self-monitoring and control, was able to rise above carnal appetites, and thus exhibit neither need to consume, nor, therefore, need to excrete. Viewed within this cultural context, the behaviours and symptoms of *anorexia* seem somewhat less distinctly pathological, and somewhat more related to these normative feminine ideals and behaviours.

At the same time as physicians were diagnosing and treating the physiological symptoms of *anorexia* but making little or no attempt to look for possible psychological - and especially emotional - origins and meanings, Sigmund Freud (1953) sought to describe the disorder from a psychodynamic or *psychoanalytic* perspective, examining the life history of the individual in order to reveal the emotional or psychogenic origins of her nervous or 'hysterical' disorder. Along with Pierre Janet, Freud was the first theorist to link loss (or denial) of appetite to sexuality, or, more specifically, to the *psychosexual* development of the individual. Whilst Freud described *anorexia* according to convention as a "nutritional neurosis", he also theorized its etiology as "a melancholia where sexuality is undeveloped" (ibid. vol.1, p. 200). That is, for Freud, all bodily appetites arose as an expression of the sexual drive or libido. And so, viewed within this framework, the anorectic's refusal to eat could be seen, not as the excessive control of hunger, but rather, as revulsion or disgust - and thus a *loss* of appetite - for food, that was the somatic expression of a repressed revulsion for sex, and therefore, a loss of libido (ibid.). Thus, as a form of what Freud termed 'conversion hysteria', *anorexia* was a neurosis produced when forbidden and thus repressed (incestual, oral) sexual impulses and fantasies (along with associated guilt and fear) interfered with normal psychosexual development; this feared, repressed sexuality finding somatic expression in the refusal of food. Freudian psychoanalytic treatment of this disorder therefore focused primarily on the (unconscious) mind rather than body, with the aim of assisting the analysand, either through hypnosis, the analysis of dreams, or what was called 'the talking cure', to bring to consciousness previously repressed (traumatic) memories, fantasies and emotions, thereby enabling a resumption of psychosexual development.

Whilst French philosopher and psychoanalyst Pierre Janet agreed with Freud that *anorexia* was caused by a "deep psychological disturbance of which the refusal of food is but the outer expression" (1907, p. 233), Janet viewed the disorder as based not on a revulsion for

food, but on the chronic and torturous *control* of appetite in the face of real and persistent hunger. For Janet, it was when a mental or emotional disturbance became an obsessive idea or *idée fixe* - for example, when anxious and shameful feelings about the body and its sexuality were expressed as an obsession with size or weight - that anorexic behaviour ensued. Janet's patient, Nadia, for instance, saw eating as immoral, and fatness as degradation, and, with the onset of sexual development, refused food altogether, so as not to gain weight or "resemble a woman", but to "remain always a small girl" (2010, np.). Thus, both Freud and Janet viewed *anorexia* as the symbolic expression of an obsessive desire to forestall sexual development and maturity.

While Freud and Janet were developing their psychoanalytic models of *anorexia*, American and British physicians, in search of new methods of treatment of the somatic symptoms of the disorder, turned to the emerging practice of *organotherapy* in which hormones extracted from the body's endocrine organs and glands were being used to treat diseases such as *diabetes* or a dysfunctional thyroid (Brumberg, 1988). Therefore, when in 1914 pathologist Morris Simmonds made a clinical connection between emaciation and destruction of the *pituitary* gland, physicians looking for a biological cause were quick to classify *anorexia* as a disorder of the *pituitary* gland, to be treated with pituitary extracts or gland implants (Silverman, 1997, p. 6). Then, in 1930, American physician John Mayo Berkman attributed the low metabolic rate symptomatic of *anorexia* to a *thyroid* deficiency, and thus prescribed the administration of thyroid extract - accompanied by increased food intake - as the cure for *anorexia*. In other cases of endocrine diagnosis and treatment, anorexic girls/women were experimentally treated with hormones such as *insulin*, *antuitrin* and *oestrogen*. Despite some temporary improvements to the health of patients, endocrinologic theories and treatments failed to identify a definitive cause or successful treatment for *anorexia*, and, as a result, were overtaken in the 1930s by a resurgence of the psychoanalytic movement, and the consequent emergence of psychosomatically focused medical models of the disorder.

Using a more integrated approach to both etiology and therapy that recognized mind and body as unified, and thus, the role that mind/emotions played in physiological (mal)functions, medical practitioners such as psychiatrist Helen Flanders Dunbar (1935) related the serious nutritional changes in *anorexia* to emotional upsets and neurotic mechanisms. Thus, medical treatments that had previously prescribed changes of

environment, forced feeding, and hormonal extracts now began to acknowledge psychosexual dysfunction as a possible cause of *anorexia*, therefore requiring psychotherapy as an essential component of its treatment. Through a series of interviews designed to uncover and explore the intimate personal experiences that underlay her neurotic behaviour, the patient was expected to realize her attitudes to food and her own body to be the abnormal effect of more deep-seated personality problems. By the 1940s, psychiatrists had come to see the anorexic woman as suffering from a serious personality disorder characterized by the obsessive-compulsive features of “perfectionism, stubbornness, overconscientiousness, neatness, meticulousness and parsimony” (Brumberg, 1988, p. 220). The anorectic’s *refusal to eat*, however, continued to be psychoanalytically described, not only as resulting from psychosexual dysfunction, but now, and more specifically, as due to fears of pregnancy and ‘oral impregnation’ that translated into a fear of food. Once this Freudian association between food and sex had become an established part of psychiatric theory and treatment, the period from the 1940s to the 1960s saw an elaboration of theories of food refusal based on the association of eating with impregnation and obesity with pregnancy. Waller, Kaufman and Deutsch (1940), for example, interpreted *anorexia* as a disgust at and loss of appetite for food caused by and symbolic of repressed (familial) fantasies of oral impregnation and associated feelings of anxiety and guilt. Thus, while “(t)he normal girl weathers the puberty storm and develops into a non-neurotic woman”,

The neurotic, who is tied with inextricable bonds to the family pattern again revives all the older conflicts and fantasies, among which may be those of impregnation through the gastrointestinal tract...The act of eating is now symbolically equated with sexuality, particularly with the fantasy of impregnation. Dependent on the quantity of guilt and anxiety associated with the fantasy of pregnancy and with aggressions within the family, there may be a complete rejection of eating which is understandable then only in terms of its symbolic significance and not of its original biological function. Now we can understand why there is more than a mere loss of appetite and actually a feeling of disgust. (pp. 6-7)

Conversely, the unconscious fantasy and desire for impregnation and pregnancy finds symbolic expression through bouts of “compulsive, ritualistic gluttony”, the associated guilt and disgust subsequently leading to food refusal and purification through obsessive cleanliness, hand-washing, etc. (ibid.). Thus, the anorexic refusal to eat, and the desexualized, childish body that is its result, were seen by psychiatrists as symptomatic of a fantasy-driven “repudiation of heterosexuality” (Brumberg, 1988, p. 225), resulting in



unsuccessful heterosexual adjustment at both psychic and somatic levels. As a consequence of this failure to achieve (submissive, self-restrained) heterosexual maturity, psychiatrists viewed anorexic females as delusional, as hysterically exhibitionistic and seductive, and as potential prostitutes obsessed with phallic fantasies, while physicians turned the microscope on the anorectic's sexual anatomy and functions, expecting to find a mal-adjustment of the sexual organs that would reflect this psychosexual dysfunction. Conducting (sometimes daily) vaginal smears and biopsies, doctors noted underdeveloped or 'atrophic' breasts and genitalia, a devitalized vagina, and "a lag in ovarian activity" (ibid. p. 227), interpreting these as physical signs of psychosexual dysfunction and infantile regression, rather than of a nutritional deprivation of the entire body.

However, the view that *anorexia* was caused by a repudiation of heterosexuality, and thus, a failure in psychosexual development, was countered by several factors. Firstly, as stated earlier, conformity to bourgeois Victorian norms and ideals of feminine beauty, desirability and marriageability *required* that young women exhibit *restraint* of all bodily appetites, whether for food, sex or otherwise. For psychoanalysts to then take anorexic food refusal as evidence of a pathological *rejection* of heterosexuality would therefore seem contradictory. Secondly, the repressed fantasies and fears of *oral impregnation* that underpinned the account of *anorexia* as psychosexual dysfunction were not commonly found in the psychotherapeutic accounts of anorexic adolescent females. Furthermore, *anorexia* had by this time also been identified in children, in married, sexually active women, and in males. Therefore, the idea of a single, psychosexually-based causal model of *anorexia* was rejected by physicians and psychoanalysts who nevertheless maintained the belief that the cause of the disorder was to be found in the patient's developmental history.

It was the ground-breaking work of psychoanalyst Hilde Bruch that reinterpreted the nature and etiology of *anorexia* in terms that not only distanced it from the Freudian notion of repressed oral ambivalence, but that also related the self-starvation (and associated bingeing) of *anorexia* (and *bulimia*) to what she saw as the pathological overeating associated with *obesity*. Both under-eating *and* over-eating were, for Bruch, disorders that evolved from a misuse of the eating function in order to camouflage or attempt to deal with family-related problems that interfered with the normal development of the individual (Gordon, 2000, p. 18). In her best known work, *Eating Disorders: Obesity, Anorexia*

*Nervosa, and the Person Within* (1974), Bruch identifies two types of *anorexia*: “primary anorexia” is characterized by: i) a distorted *body image* in which the body is delusionally misperceived as fat (thus driving the relentless pursuit of thinness); ii) an inability to correctly identify internal feelings, needs and emotions (e.g. an inability to recognize hunger); and iii) a deficient sense of the self as *helpless* and *ineffective*, and as controlled by external expectations and demands rather than one’s own thoughts, feelings and desires (pp. 251-255). In contrast, secondary or “atypical anorexia” has as its main symptom, not thinness, body image distortion, or a deficit in autonomy, but rather, “various symbolic misinterpretations of the eating function” (p. 236), in which the biological eating function is hijacked and distortedly resignified by underlying neurotic or psychotic personality difficulties such as, for example, fear of oral impregnation (p. 238). The main diagnostic criteria for Bruch’s *primary anorexia* can be seen to correspond with the DSM-IV criteria listed earlier in this chapter, although the latter’s behavioural focus sees it excluding Bruch’s notion of a deficient sense of self and associated internal states (Gordon, 2000, p. 21). Sociologist Richard Gordon suggests that this diagnostic focus on the *physical* components of *anorexia* has (in part) led to its contemporary biomedical interpretation as primarily a physical disorder, with malfunction in the hypothalamic centre of the brain which controls feeding and hormonal function, being postulated as the most likely cause (ibid.). Bruch, however, gives primacy to the *psychological* components, by suggesting that the self-starvation of *anorexia* represents the adolescent child’s struggle for *autonomy*, control, competence, and self-respect in the face of the mother’s failure to recognize his/her independence (1974, p. 337). Failure to achieve autonomy and the associated awareness that one’s thoughts, feelings, emotions and body are one’s own (and not appropriated and controlled by another) results in the anorexic adolescent developing a distorted and disconnected view of both internal and external reality. This leads to irrational thought, immature, manipulative, resistant, attention-demanding behaviours, and anxiety about the developing female body for which Bruch chides the anorexic patient, saying, “Why not accept normal healthy womanhood?” “What do you really have to give up in order to get well?” (1988, p. 121). Acknowledging that traditional psychoanalysis - in which the *analyst* interpreted the patient’s repressed thoughts and feelings *for* him or her - had been ineffective in treating *anorexia*, Bruch reconceives therapeutic treatment as a “fact-finding treatment approach” that she calls “*the constructive use of ignorance*” (1974, p. 338). The goal of this treatment is “to make it possible for a patient to uncover *his own* abilities, *his* resources and inner capacities for thinking, judging, and feeling” (ibid.), and

for the therapist to then confirm accurate conceptions and *correct* errors and misconceptions in the patient's thinking. In this way the capacity for self-awareness, autonomy and effective relations and actions begins to develop, and, as a consequence, the anorexic misuse of the eating function gradually wanes.

However, as with earlier psychoanalytic theories (e.g. Waller et al. [1940]) that interpreted *anorexia* as the dysfunctional repudiation of heterosexuality, Bruch's interpretation of *anorexia* as expressing a pathological resistance to 'normal, healthy womanhood' ignores the fact that the traditional (heterosexual, middle-class) social and cultural ideals of femininity to which those approaching womanhood have been expected to conform have demanded the very thinness, self-denial and dependence for which Bruch chides the supposedly irrational, immature, resistant, anorexic patient. In other words, within patriarchal thought and cultures, the concepts of 'normal, healthy womanhood' and 'mature, autonomous self-direction' have not been coincident, as Bruch assumes, but rather, contradictory (Lester, 1997). It was this realization that became the foundation for subsequent feminist *cultural* approaches to *anorexia*, such as those of Susie Orbach (1986) and Susan Bordo (1993), with both viewing the disorder as a form of protest or resistance against the Western (middle-class) cultural imperative that girls/women must be slim to be beautiful, and therefore, to have a measure of self-worth. However, as Rebecca Lester notes, at the same time, and in opposition to both the cultural and psychoanalytic views of *anorexia*, the psychiatric profession began to move (back) towards a *biological* cause and explanation for *anorexia*, this time drawing heavily upon "psychopharmaceutical management", in the form of anti-depressant and anti-psychotic drugs, to treat the disorder (1997, p. 480). Thus, from the 1980s up to the present day, *anorexia nervosa* has been variously described and diagnosed as a primarily *biological, psychological, cultural, or biopsychosocial (-spiritual)* disorder (Bordo, 1993; Van Wormer & Davis, 2008). This widening array of discursive approaches has paradoxically been accompanied by an increase in prevalence of the disorder, not only among Western, heterosexual girls/women, but also now among boys/men, as well as non-Western, non-white, non-heterosexual girls/women of all ages and social classes. It was also during this period that *bulimia nervosa* was first identified in Western adolescents, this disorder involving frequent episodes of *bingeing* and *purging* that produce symptoms characteristic of *anorexia* (e.g. starvation, *amenorrhoea*) and/or unique to *bulimia* (e.g. facial swelling, oral decay). It is in order to understand the reasons for this increase in prevalence that I now further explicate

and critique the most prominent contemporary discursive approaches to *anorexia/bulimia*.<sup>45</sup>

### ***Biomedical Approaches***

*Biomedical* discourses posit a biological cause to *anorexia*, that cause having variously been described as: i) a serotonergic disorder of the hypothalamus (Russell, 1977); ii) neurological disorders (Laessle *et al.*, 1989); iii) sensory disturbances and cognitive malfunctions; iv) brain tumours (Price *et al.*, 2004); v) seasonal changes or the associated lack of sunlight; vi) genetic factors (explaining the inheritability of the disorder [Rumney, 2009]); vii) endocrinal disorders; and viii) dysfunction in the *limbic* region of the brain (associated with appetite and emotion) (Cummings & Mega, 2003). An example of recent American biomedical thought on *anorexia* can be found in the words of Dr. Thomas Insel (2006), Director of the U.S. National Institute of Mental Health:

Research tells us that anorexia nervosa is a brain disease with severe metabolic effects on the entire body. While the symptoms are behavioural, this illness has a biological core, with genetic components, changes in brain activity, and neural pathways currently under study. Most women with anorexia recover, usually following intensive psychological and medical care.

This *neurobiological* approach can therefore be seen to perpetuate the *neurological* approach of Gull in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the *endocrinal* approach of Simmonds and Berkman in the early 20th century, though none of these physicians was as optimistic about the recovery rate as Insel, whose claim that “(m)ost women with anorexia recover” is challenged by Halse, Honey and Boughtwood’s (2007) finding that “(f)ive years after diagnosis, approximately 50% of sufferers remain clinically ill” (p. 221). Moreover, as Joan Brumberg (1988) argues, whilst *anorexia* is certainly associated with severe physiological abnormalities (e.g. emaciation, endocrine disorder, amenorrhoea, low metabolic rate, malnutrition, anaemia, hypotension, and hypothermia), proponents of a (isolated) *biological* cause cannot answer the questions: Why do 90-95% of cases of *anorexia* occur in those with female bodies? Why has *anorexia* historically been largely confined to the (white) middle and upper classes of Western or so-called ‘developed’ countries? And why, during the past forty years, has there been such a dramatic increase in

---

<sup>45</sup> Because *bulimia* is seen as closely related to *anorexia*, with several theorists (e.g. Russell, 1979) viewing the former as a development of the latter, this explication focuses primarily on *anorexia*, referring specifically to *bulimia* only when a distinction is required.

the incidences of both *anorexia* and *bulimia*, crossing race, class, age and sexual divisions? (See also Young-Bruehl, 1998; Malson, 1998; Beumont, 2007).

### ***Psychological Approaches***

In contrast to the *biomedical* approach, the contemporary *psychological* approach to *anorexia* can be seen to have followed on from Hilde Bruch's (partly Freudian) psychoanalytical understanding of the disorder as an individual, family-related psychopathology, caused by the inhibition of 'normal' adolescent psychological development (of accurate body image, percepts and concepts), and resulting in a failure to achieve mature, logical, autonomous womanhood. By refusing food, the anorectic controls her body when she has little control over her life, and also eludes (hetero)sexual maturation. Bruch's (2001) clinical reports also indicate that, contrary to Freud's notion that the (sexually repressed) anorectic is disgusted by food and thus has no appetite, the anorexic adolescent in fact has an inordinate interest in food, and is constantly aware of, but denies gratification to, her hunger. For Bruch, it is not *sex* but *fat* that the anorectic fears and escapes through self-starvation. Following in this vein, contemporary psychological models of *anorexia* have variously positioned it as: i) an isolated and pathological response to the developmental crises (of individuation, autonomy and sexual development) that are part of normal adolescence (Brumberg, 1988); ii) a contemporary form of classic *obsessive-compulsive* disorder in which preoccupations with food, calories, exercise, and weight come to dominate the mind and everyday practices (Rothenberg, 1990); iii) a blocking of normal processes of individuation due to dysfunctional intrafamilial relations, often involving abuse or maternal conflict (Minuchin & Fishman, 2004); or iv) a dependence disorder or 'addiction' (similar to drug/alcohol addiction) in which the anorectic becomes addicted to the psychological and/or physiological effects of starvation (Szmukler & Tatum, 1984). While various therapies have been created to treat *anorexia* as it is characterized by these psychological models (e.g. Minuchin has developed a Structural Family Therapy centre), like the *biomedical* model, the *psychological* model fails to account for the historical sex/gender, class and race specificity of *anorexia*, as well as the increase in (reported) incidence of eating disorders during the past fifty years (Gordon, 2001). It is for this reason that several contemporary feminist theorists have proposed a *cultural* approach to *anorexia* (and *bulimia*) which sees patriarchal *ideals of femininity*, and in particular, the white, Western, middle-class cultural imperative that a girl/woman must be *slim* to be beautiful (and therefore, desirable), as the cause of the

obsessive dieting that is increasingly resulting in the development of eating disorders (Bordo, 1993; Orbach, 1986; Brumberg, 1988; Chesler, 1972).

### ***Cultural Approaches***

Feminist theorists Susie Orbach and Susan Bordo were amongst the earliest proponents of this cultural approach to *anorexia*. Contrary to its biomedical and psychological interpretation as an isolated, individual pathology or disease, both view the disorder as the extreme manifestation of, and a form of (unconscious) *protest* or resistance against, popular culture's objectification and normative inscription of the female body according to dominant ideologies, norms and ideals of femininity. That is, from an early age, weight and dieting become an obsession for at least 75% of Western girls and women, as they are bombarded with and learn from social and media images and cues that their (self) worth depends upon, and rises or falls in inverse relation to, their body size and shape.<sup>46</sup> Following Bruch, Orbach (1986) interprets *anorexia* as "a metaphor for our age" (p. 4), a psychological response to the "contradictory" feminine roles inscribing women in recent times, in the same way that *hysteria* was a psychosomatic response to the "imprisoning" feminine role imposed upon women in Victorian times. For Orbach, it is the confusing and contradictory social and cultural demands on late 20<sup>th</sup> century girls - to be not only autonomously self-determining but also pleasing to and nurturing of others - that occasionally produce *anorexia* by *preventing* separation (from the mother), and thus precluding the attainment of selfhood. Just as *hysteria* was a protest against feminine ideals of self-denying passivity, frailty, purity, dependency and sequestered domesticity, a protest that manifested as "the exaggeration of ideal womanliness" (ibid. p. 6), so too *anorexia* protests (through exaggeration) a contemporary social context in which expanded feminine ideals and roles - in offering the added option of entry into the paid workforce - have exacerbated the requirement for visible restraint and denial of female needs and desires. However, where Bruch (2001) views the increasing and contradictory social roles offered to women as a reason for the anorectic's repudiation of femininity, Orbach argues that it is not women's equality, but their ongoing *inequality*, that fuels *anorexia*. For this new, apparently liberated role within the paid labour-force that seemingly offers (and requires) independence and autonomy in fact demands women's acceptance of an ongoing

---

<sup>46</sup> The statistic of 75% is quoted by both Bordo (1993, p. 154) and Gordon (2000, p. 122) and based on a 1984 poll of American women by *Glamour* magazine. A survey commissioned by *Top Sante* magazine in 2000 indicated that 85% of U.K. women are obsessed with their body size and shape, with 86% having dieted at some time, while the U.S. Dept of Health (2007) reports that, on any given day, 50% of American women are dieting.

*inequality* of opportunity and remuneration, along with acceptance of and compliance with the *masculinist* concepts, values and practices on which the public sphere has historically been founded (Orbach, 1986, p. 9). Thus, within contemporary Western society and culture, the *slim* female body has become a requirement not only for (and symbolic of) feminine beauty and desirability, but also - as an androgynous symbol of intelligence, autonomy and control - for woman's entry into, and (limited) success within the (masculinist) public and professional sphere. For, whether a girl enacts (feminine) dependency or (masculine) autonomy, she *must* be self-restrained in order to gain recognition and approval. And in Western culture, self-restraint equates with *slimness*. The anorexic woman, then, is desperately striving/starving for success, love and approval, while her body - "woman's ticket into society" - becomes the "mouthpiece" via which she unconsciously protests (as a 'hunger strike') these conflicting ideals of femininity that cause "discomfort with oneself", the separation of self from body, and, at their extreme, the anorexic "denial of selfhood" (ibid. p. 28).

Feminist theorist Susan Bordo also takes a socio-cultural approach to anorexia, albeit of a different form. Whilst recognizing the biomedical and psychological aspects of *anorexia*, Bordo (1993) emphasizes the connection between *cultural* beliefs, practices, norms and images, their shaping and signification of the female body, and the occurrence of female disorders such as *hysteria*, *agoraphobia* and *anorexia*. She therefore theorizes from a feminist *postmodernist* but also *materialist* perspective, interpreting these disorders as "pathologies of female protest" (p. 159) that are the "complex crystallizations" (p. 35) of wider, socio-historically specific norms and deviancies of gender (and also race, class, age, etc.) as they construct and constrain, normalize and pathologize the real - but also culturally mediated - female body. Thus, whilst seeing *anorexia* as a multidimensional disorder influenced by familial, perceptual, cognitive and (possibly) biological factors, Bordo also relates it to the "increasing emphasis that fashion has placed on slenderness" (p. 140). She therefore attempts to discover "*why* our culture is so obsessed with keeping our bodies slim, tight and young" (ibid.), in order to demystify and understand the origins, processes and meanings of *anorexia*. For Bordo, *anorexia* is an unconscious protest at what Kim Chernin (1983) calls "the tyranny of slenderness", a physical revolt that occurs when a variety of cultural currents that variously equate slimness with purity, control and transcendence converge at once on the female body. *Anorexia* is therefore simply "a remarkably overdetermined *symptom* of some of the multifaceted and heterogeneous

distresses of our age” (Bordo, 1993, p. 141), cultural distresses that become manifest on or through the anorexic body when it is inscribed by specific cultural currents or “axes of continuity” (ibid. p. 142). Because Bordo’s approach to *anorexia* has had a major influence on subsequent theories and forms of treatment, and because she too situates the disorder within a *metaphysical* context (but in a way that I later argue to be problematic), it is useful to examine Bordo’s axial model of *anorexia* in more detail.

The three main axes of continuity that Bordo sees as converging in the cultural production of *anorexia* are: the *dualist* axis, the *control* axis, and the *gender/power* axis. The *dualist* axis situates *anorexia* within the dualistic heritage of Western thought and cultural practice that originated with Plato, was developed by Augustine, and that found its most concrete expression in Descartes’ conception of human existence as “bifurcated” into two realms: the immaterial (or the soul/mind), and the material (or the body). As reflected in the genealogy in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Bordo describes this mind/body dualistic logic as depicting the sensual body as *alien* to, as a source of *confinement* and *limitation* of, and as the *enemy* of, the reason-based soul/mind/self that is imprisoned within and corrupted by what Augustine calls the “slimy desires of the flesh” (*Confessions*, 2.2). For these philosophers, says Bordo, the hungering, desiring, lusting, unruly body is “the locus of *all that threatens our attempts at control*” (1993, p. 145). All three therefore endeavour to provide the philosophical, religious, intellectual and/or physical means to subdue, transcend, and thus exist independently of the hungers, passions and desires of the fleshly body - whether that means be the Platonic pursuit of Ideas of absolute beauty, goodness and truth, or the Cartesian method for receiving God’s truth. As Augustine is haunted by his (sinful) sexual desires, so the anorexic woman is haunted not only by her desire for slimness, but also by her gnawingly irrepressible *hunger*. Thus, says Bordo, hunger is experienced as an alien invader, a feared desire that, like the body, is experienced as a threat coming from outside of the self, the dread of hunger exceeded only by the dread of fat. Because the restraint of hungers and desires only serves to make them more powerful, total freedom of mind can ultimately be achieved only through their annihilation. And so, just as Augustine describes his struggle to control lustful desires as a battle between “two wills”, that of the (good) spirit and that of the (evil) flesh, so may *anorexia* be experienced as a battle between the (good) mind and the (evil) body, thinness signalling the “triumph” of mind over body, and transcendent purity over corporeal (sexual) impurity (ibid. p. 147).



In locating *anorexia* on the second axis of continuity, the axis of *control*, Bordo relates the anorectic's relentlessly self-disciplined pursuit of thinness - and thus, spiritual perfection - through compulsive jogging or other exercise to the contemporary Western bourgeois obsession with physical exercise and 'extreme' sports. Rather than exercising simply to attain physical fitness and health, the obsessive runner or body-builder pushes his/her body to its limits and beyond in the quest to attain and exhibit perfection, purity and strength of spirit, mind and will. As for the young men of Plato's 'Gymnasium', the greater the (show of) discipline, athleticism and muscular definition, the greater the strength and control of mind/will over the appetites of the body. Thus, like the anorectic, the contemporary female body-builder strives for total mastery of her body, the deliberate re-shaping of the body to fit an ideal image giving a sense of control and accomplishment when other aspects of their lives seem out of control (ibid. p. 152). More than just a feeling of mastery over life, this "contemporary body-fetishism" also expresses the desire for mastery and defeat of death. However, while the compulsively exercising anorectic may - like the elite body-builder and marathon runner - gain a sense of mastery through extreme control, Bordo notes that it is not power but *powerlessness* that is the main feature of *anorexia*.

The third axis of continuity - the *gender/power* axis - relates the distorted body image associated with *anorexia* to the more general misperception of, and obsessive dissatisfaction with, body shape and weight amongst 75 percent of American women, as a result of the contemporary 'tyranny of slenderness' (Bordo, 1993, p. 154). For, as the ideal female body shape (as presented via fashion, media and advertizing) has become steadily leaner since the 1970s, anxiety levels have risen as even *constant* dieting, purging, and laxative use amongst young women fails to reduce their actual body size/shape to fit the current cultural ideal of slenderness. This contemporary obsession with thinness therefore results in a constant war between the pure, controlling mind (perceived as male) and the impure, uncontrolled (female) body, a battle that the anorectic aims to win by erasing her body and becoming pure, perfect, male mind. Thus, for Bordo, the main reasons for the anorectic's attempted disembodiment are firstly, a "fear and disdain for traditional female roles and social limitations", and secondly, a deep fear of the archetypal image of the voraciously devouring, sexually insatiable "Female" (ibid. p. 155). As a result, anorexic girls express a fear of mature, rounded, reproductive womanhood, wishing instead, like "Peter Pan", to remain a *child* forever; a wish that Bordo interprets as the anorectic's wish to escape her female body and be a *boy* forever. It is no surprise, then, that *anorexia*

usually begins around the time of puberty, when the very visible development of breasts and pubic hair and the onset of menstruation signal that it is time to begin preparation for entry into the submissively feminine roles of marriage, domesticity and motherhood. As 'Aimee Liu' says of her anorexic reaction to pubertal development: "I grab my breasts, pinching them until they hurt. If only I could eliminate them, cut them off if need be, to become as flat-chested as a child again" (Liu, cited in Bordo, 1993, p. 156). For Bordo, as for Orbach and other feminist cultural theorists, this anorexic reaction parallels the *hysteria* of the late nineteenth century in expressing an unconscious feminist *protest* by intelligent, creative and independently minded girls/women against the constraints and contradictions of the traditional feminine role, and a *rebellion* against following her mother into a life of subjugated, isolated domesticity.

Bordo further notes that the other gendered impetus for *anorexia* - the mythology and archetypal image of the devouring, insatiable, uncontrollable 'Female' - seems to flourish at times of "gross environmental and social crisis" (1993, p. 161), and particularly in those historical periods (such as the rise of first and second wave feminisms) when women are seeking social and political equality and independence. Witchcraft, for example, was said to arise from insatiable carnal lust, which, said the witch-hunters' handbook, would drive such possessed women to "consort even with the devil".<sup>47</sup> The image of the dark, dangerous, evil female has therefore served as justification not just for the torture and murder of (non-conforming) women as witches, but for variously fashionable forms of reductive, immobilizing physical restraint; whether it be the 'hourglass' or 'S-curve' corsets of the Victorian era (sometimes requiring rib removal), or the sleek, stilettoed *Manolo Blahnik* shoes of today (sometimes requiring toe removal). For only as a model of suitably reshaped and restrained femininity might a woman escape the degradation and punishment reserved for the 'evil', voraciously desiring female, and achieve the rewards and admiration reserved for 'good', fashionably restrained, subjugated female bodies. In this way, the archetypal image of the uncontrollably desiring, polluted 'Female' has historically served to deter women from thoughts of independence and autonomy, by reinforcing heterosexual norms and requirements of feminine dependency and immobilized passivity. But, whether slavishly succumbing to these culturally imposed forms and stylized expressions of self-restraint, or protesting and rejecting them via *anorexia*, these

---

<sup>47</sup>The witch-hunters' handbook is the *Malleus Maleficarum* written in 1487 by Heinrich Kramer and Jacob Sprenger, as a guide used for the identification, interrogation and conviction of medieval European women (and some men) as witches.

women are perceived by Bordo to be driven by the illusion of power and self-determining freedom, whilst at the same time appearing to collude in their own oppression and/or destruction (ibid p. 167). It is in order to more clearly understand how the various social, cultural and discursive axes of continuity operate to shape, restrain and otherwise construct ‘normal’ and ‘pathological’ forms of female identity that Bordo draws upon Michel Foucault’s analytics of power and subjectivity.

Writing from what may be seen as a poststructuralist perspective on the (pre-modern and modern) history of Western philosophical ideas and social practices, Foucault rejects the Cartesian notion of a singular, unified and autonomous human *subject*, comprised of immaterial mind in control of a material body, that exists as a ‘natural given’ prior to its entry into an external world of objects and social relations. Instead, Foucault (1995, 1980) sees subjectivity as always fluidly and multiply produced by (pre-existing) social and discursive relations, institutions, and technologies of *power* that shape, discipline and inscribe the natural body with the aim of constructing from it a seemingly autonomous, socially productive, but also governable subject. This power cannot, therefore, be seen as the permanent possession of one dominant individual or group to be wielded over an always subordinate ‘other’, and therefore only operating repressively from the top down, as the ‘repressive hypothesis’ or other ‘grand narratives’ of overarching gender or racial oppression have suggested (Grosz, 1990, p. 88). Rather, for Foucault, power is exercised by individuals located within a vast network of social and discursive relations, institutions and technologies of power that utilize disciplinary techniques and the (implicit) threat of punishment and/or marginalization to repress, reshape, and thus *produce* the body as (sexualized) subject, according to a set of functional norms. As Foucault (1980) puts it,

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody’s hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between *its* threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power...If power were never anything but repressive, if it never did anything but to say no, do you really think one would be brought to obey it?  
(p. 98 & 119)

The natural body that is constructed and moulded into subjectivity by and within these various relations and technologies of power is a (Cartesian) machine-like body, but not one that is simply a collection of mechanical parts. Rather, Foucault (1995) draws upon De

Guibert's concept of the 'natural body' as a whole, *developing* organism, with its own internal developmental processes that may be subtly disciplined, rechannelled and reshaped into 'normalized', ensouled subjectivity, through the use of regulatory drills and practices. It is this organic body that - as "the bearer of forces and the seat of duration" (ibid. p. 167) - provides the (analysable, manipulable) material basis for and enables the social/discursive construction of (normal and pathological) subjectivities and identities. For only a persistingly whole, identical, self-motivated, growing body may be remoulded over a period of time by external forces. Those bodies, however, that have not complied with sexual/social norms (overtly homosexual bodies, for example) have historically been classified as the deviant 'other' of the normal 'subject' and confined to prison, hospital or mental asylum, to be subjected to medical, political, spatial and social technologies of 'normalization'. In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault contrasts pre-modern and modern methods of achieving social control; the brutal, public displays of punishment used in pre-modern times being replaced in modernity by the hidden, non-physical strategies of separation, surveillance, monitoring, regulation and normalization of sexual bodies. Based upon the "Panoptic" principle that we may always be subject to observation by a disciplinary "supervisor" (ibid. p. 18) who sees but cannot be seen, these strategies of normalization constrain and gradually mould individuals to be self-monitoring and self-restraining in order to avoid punishment through, for example, social exclusion, detention (in schools), or physical isolation (in prison). But, because "power creates its own resistance" (ibid. p. 73), it is the knowledge and understanding of how these (covert) strategies of social control operate to inscribe various and mutable identities and subjectivities onto individual bodies (and their desires) that presents the possibility of *resistance* to one's dualistic social/discursive identification or interpellation as the abnormal, abject 'Other'.

One of the main strategies of social control in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been the medicalization and pathologizing of the *female* body, and, in particular, its sexual and reproductive functions. It is in locating the anorexic body within *this* context that Bordo and several other feminist cultural theorists (Moi, 1985b; Malson, 1998; McWhorter, 1999; Halse *et al*, 2007) have been able to interpret *anorexia* and other gender-related disorders or deviancies as not only socially and discursively produced, but also as (potential) sites of *protest* against the imposition of socio-historically specific, dualistically defined ideals and pathologies of feminine 'Othering'. For Foucault (1970)

rejects the classical, hierarchically dualistic conception, definition, and construction of subjectivities and (sexual) identities as ‘male/female’, ‘heterosexual/homosexual’, ‘normal/deviant’ and ‘good/evil’, looking instead to Nietzsche’s unification of Dionysian (female) *fluidity* with Apollonian (fixed, male) *form* in order to reconceive sexuality as a continuum of constructed sexes, sexualities, and behaviours that all deviate to some degree from the standardized norm. Viewed in this way, subjectivity is never fixed, singular or pre-given, but always fluidly and multiply inscribed, and therefore always able to be accepted, rejected or modified. It is this notion of fluidly contiguous subjectivities and identities that allows Bordo (1993, p. 170) to interpret *anorexia* as an extreme manifestation or ‘crystallization’ of the wider and contradictory socio-cultural ideals of femininity imposed on *all* twentieth century Western girls/women; ideals that the anorectic protests through their *parodic* manifestation. I would argue, however, that Bordo misconstrues *anorexia* due to a limited view of the essentialist logic of Plato, Augustine and Descartes (and consequently, of Foucault’s anti-essentialist conception of subjectivity) that mistakenly posits the ‘mind/body’ dualism, and thus overlooks the more fundamental ‘man/woman’ dualism, as the metaphysical origin of *anorexia*.

### **The Metaphysical/Essence Model of Anorexia**

Theoretical support for the claim that it is the ‘man/woman’ dualism that is at the root of *anorexia* can be found in what I argue to be Bordo’s *misconstrual* of Platonic and Cartesian dualism. For, when she grounds *anorexia* in the ‘mind/body’ dualism espoused by Plato, Augustine and Descartes, thus viewing the anorectic as protesting and rejecting traditional feminine ideals and fearful archetypes by becoming a purely transcendent masculine mind, Bordo misconstrues the metaphysics of these philosophers who (as indicated in Section I) construct the mind/body dualism only by denying a soul/essence to woman. And this construction does not correlate *mind* with *male*, and *body* with *female*, but conceives the lower, sensual, material aspect of man’s mind *and* body as purely/impurely *female*. That is, denied her own essential form or existence, ‘woman’ constitutes both the pure, passively receptive mind/soul that forms and motivates man’s wholly immanent being (the good *Psyche/Diotima*), and the (im)proper sensual/sexual body that constantly threatens its downfall and death (the evil *Eve*). And even when Descartes definitively separates mind from body, he still conceives the immature mind of man as femininely pure, obedient and submissively receptive to impregnation with the

masculinizing Word/*Logos* of God, thereby being transformed into the virile masculine generator of scientific truths (Scheman, 1993). For, like Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Augustine, Kant, Husserl, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Derrida and Foucault, Descartes conceives the development of mature, enlightened, rational subjectivity as requiring ascendance from a pure, primordial state of passive, femininely submissive immanence, to a (rationally and/or aesthetically) cultivated state of active, dominant, unified (manly) *male* transcendence - whether that subjectivity be disembodied or *embodied*. Similarly, for these philosophers, as for Western philosophy in general, the real, unappropriated *sexual* woman/female - as man's formless, chaotically undifferentiated, abyssal 'not-man' - signifies dark, evil, unbounded, unconstructible fluidity, and thus, symbolic and subjective non-existence. To ignore this more fundamental Platonic/Aristotelian 'man/woman' dualism is to therefore ignore the possibility of a fundamental connection between *anorexia* and the real *sexual female* self/body.<sup>48</sup> Further support for this assertion that it is the 'man/woman' dualism that underpins *anorexia* can be found in Foucault's strategies to overcome Platonic/Cartesian dualisms, strategies that Bordo sees as a means for the anorectic to resist and escape her 'Othering'.

Drawing upon Kantian Enlightenment ideals of rational autonomy and the aesthetic ideals of 19<sup>th</sup> century French poet Charles Baudelaire, the later Foucault (1991) suggests that successful resistance to and freedom from oppressive social/discursive conditions requires the existence of a self-conscious, self-critical, embodied subject who may free himself (*sic*) from subordinate immaturity by undertaking the *aesthetic* and *ethical* cultivation and reconstitution of the self, thereby attaining an enlightened state of mature, self-determined subjectivity. This aesthetics of the self requires the cultivation of body and mind into what is essentially a beautiful, original, self-created "work of art" that, in creating a "critical ontology of ourselves", sets its own transgressive but also ascetically based standards and limits of morality and behaviour (*ibid.* p. 47). Following Baudelaire, Foucault finds the ideal expression of this embodied, aesthetically cultivated and enlightened subject in the modern figure of the (male) "dandy" or "flâneur". Besides Baudelaire, other famous examples of the modern dandy are 18<sup>th</sup> century Frenchman *Beau Brummell* and 19<sup>th</sup> century Englishman *Oscar Wilde*, both personifying the dandyish characteristics of a cultivated indifference to social rules, norms, values and practices, especially those of

---

<sup>48</sup>To say that the mind/body dualism is not the cause of *anorexia* is not to deny that the anorectic may experience the body as a separate or alien entity. However, this separation may be seen as a symptom of the deeper cause.

bourgeois capitalism and compulsory (masculine) heterosexuality. Instead, the dandy values and practices a decadent dedication to useless, artistically absorbed passions, and a constant reinvention of both physical and psychic aspects of the self that requires the cultivation of a fluidly rational and moral mind, and a sartorially refined, stylishly androgynous appearance. But, despite its cultivated indifference to social norms and constraints, an essential feature of dandyism is the ascetic moderation and control of the *body*, as evidenced by the slender, refined feminine shape often acquired through corseting and dieting. For Baudelaire's modern man views the body as a sort of raw, natural materiality that, through artistic creation, must be "torn apart from all images of nature" in order that he cultivate and attain mature, self-controlled (femininely embodied) subjectivity (Seppä, 2004, §5).

One might think, then, that Foucault's aesthetics of the self, in recognizing an always embodied, culturally- and self-constituted and ensouled subjectivity, offers a perfect alternative to the dualistic separation of (male) mind from (female) body that Bordo and others (Wolf, 1991; Lester, 1997) identify as the metaphysical origin of *anorexia*, and thus, the possibility of successful (rather than collusive) resistance to and escape from one's 'Othering'. For this Foucauldian subject seemingly does away with fixed, hierarchically divided dualisms such as 'masculine/feminine', 'mind/body', and 'heterosexual/homosexual' (that underpin traditional feminine ideals of passive subservience), instead allowing the self-directed subject a fully autonomous, plurally embodied, and multiply-identified existence that transcends normalizing/pathologizing forms and mechanisms of social and discursive control.

In seemingly offering a means of escape from familial/social construction as the deviant, pathological 'Other', Foucault's model of plurally embodied, self-cultivated subjectivity has informed therapeutic approaches to eating disorders such as the 'narrative therapy' developed by Michael White and David Epston (1990). Narrative therapy sees a person's identity and her problem (disorder) not as essentially fixed and unified, but as separate entities that are constructed and shaped by the stories or narratives that interpret our life experiences, with negative or damaging experiences/stories producing the problem. In conceiving him/her self as separate from the externally imposed problem, the person can then remove it by replacing or giving new meaning to the problem-causing narratives (ibid, p. 14). As the problem, *anorexia* is depicted as an alien invader that infects not just the

adolescent but the entire family; an invader that may be repelled through unified resistance by the family, and a collaborative weaving of new narratives that focus on experiences of intrafamilial unity and harmony, rather than of conflict. As a language-based therapy, narrative therapy claims to have a high success rate in the treatment of eating disorders; claims that have been challenged, however, by those who assert a lack of clinical and empirical support, a success rate no higher than other forms of therapy, and the possibility that ‘recovery’ from *anorexia* may simply involve its transformation into other mental disorders such as depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder (Abels, 2001, p.30; Schmidt *et al*, 2007; Wentz *et al*, 2009). There is, however, a mostly overlooked problem within Foucault’s model of fluidly self-cultivated subjectivity that, I suggest, may refigure it, not as a basis for the successful *treatment of anorexia*, but rather, along with other (seemingly) anti-essentialist poststructuralist discourses, as an integral part of its metaphysical *origin*.

When Foucault idealizes the Baudelairean dandy as the epitome of mature, autonomous subjectivity, and therefore presents this modern aesthetics of the self as a model for overcoming oppressively dualizing social, medical and scientific discourses and strategies of normalization, he initially seems to offer a way out to women currently shaped, constrained and pathologized by oppressive and conflicting ideals of femininity. For if the Foucauldian male body can be fluidly (re)constructed into different subjectivities and identities, then why not the (anorexic) female body? The very reason why not lies within Foucault’s Kantian/Baudelairean model of rationally controlled, aesthetically shaped subjectivity. For, as Anita Seppä (2004) argues, the apparent usefulness to feminist theory of Foucault’s attempts (along with those of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and Derrida) to bring the ‘Other’ back into traditional philosophy and theories of subjectivity evaporates when it is revealed that,

[Foucault] misses – or actively ignores – the fact that for Baudelaire and many other modern male thinkers a dandy is by definition the opposite of a woman. In other words, just as in ancient theories of the self, in which femininity and self-government are largely taken as opposite conceptions, in Baudelaire there is a deep structural opposition between women and dandies...[that] is well evidenced in Baudelaire’s early definition of a dandy, which places a strict opposition between the terms ‘dandy’ (artificial, pure beauty) and ‘woman’ (something natural and sexually uncontrolled). (Seppä, 2004, §9)

Baudelaire makes this structural opposition that positions ‘woman’ as the necessary opposite (or obverse side) of aesthetically self-constituted subjectivity all too clear when he states,



A woman is the opposite of a dandy. Therefore, she is horrible. A woman is hungry and she wants to eat, she is thirsty and wants to drink. She is in heat and wants to be fucked...A woman is natural, that is, she is disgusting [*abominable*]. Therefore, she is always vulgar. (1977, cited in and translated by Seppä, 2004, §9)

Though perhaps more vividly stated, Baudelaire's conception of woman as uncontrollably 'natural' and therefore uncultivable simply echoes that of Greek mythology, of Platonic/Aristotelian metaphysics, and reiterated by male philosophers and theologians since, in perpetuating the (binary, moralized) conception of 'woman' and her natural sexual female body as - like Eve and the Maenads - essentially *formless*, and thus, dangerously uncontrollable, impure, and *evil*.

Because Foucault's analytics of power, subjectivity and aesthetic selfhood fail to challenge or even acknowledge the Nietzschean/Baudelairean conception of 'woman' and her sexual female body as the base, formless - and thus uncontrollable and uncultivable - fluidity on which the very possibility of the rational/aesthetic cultivation of the embodied, bi-gendered male self depends, Foucault (like Derrida) simply assumes and perpetuates the dualistic presupposition that only 'man' is capable of cultivation into subjectivity. For only those with male bodies have the enduring (phallic) *form* that permits the social construction and aesthetic self-cultivation of mind and body (and its 'deviant' desires) into ascetically restrained subjectivity. Those with real (sexual) female bodies, now dispossessed of even inferior, objectified definition as man's proper 'Other', are reduced to formless material fluidity and thus subjective non-existence, as the 'holes' and 'slime' that are the origin and the condition of (post)modern male subjectivity. Thus, in reuniting the Cartesian masculine mind with femininely subjugated body, Foucault (like Derrida) overcomes the 'mind/body' dualism *only* by leaving the 'man/woman' dualism firmly in its pre-Socratic place. As a result, and as his own life experience reveals, Foucault also leaves the 'hetero/homosexual' dualism firmly in place, his own choice to remain discursively silent and closeted about his homosexuality revealing the enduring power of the sexual dualism, underpinned by man's homophobic fear of (fatal) feminization, to retain its fixed, hierarchically divided form.<sup>49</sup> In this case, Foucault's resistance to his 'othering' seems to have simply reinforced the repressive dualistic structures that he sought to dismantle, thereby casting real woman as

---

<sup>49</sup> Here I draw on the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1992, pp. 284-7), who reveals that the fluidity, multiplicity and diversity that Foucault theoretically attributes to socio-discursively produced sex/gender identities and subjectivities was contradicted by his own dualistically closeted life and writings.

(improper) ‘Other’ into the abyss of de-formed, unconstructible non-existence. On this basis, Foucault's analytics of power, resistance and embodied subjectivity reveals itself, not as the anorexic girl's means of escape from objectified, abject Othering into constructed subjectivity, but rather, as the *obstruction* of that escape through its denial of a persistingly whole, constructible *form* to her natural sexual female self/body. If this is the case, then Foucauldian/Derridean postmodern theory (and its performance) may be creating the metaphysical conditions for *anorexia* to occur, not as a form of protest, but as a girl/woman's battle for subjective *survival* in the face of the looming non-existence of womanhood. For, only boys or sufficiently boyish bodies may be subjects. Further grounds for this hypothesis can be found within other socio-cultural approaches to eating disorders.

Whilst *Bordo* attributes *anorexia* to the social/cultural construction of the female body with confusing and contradictory feminine ideals and archetypes, other theorists have attributed it to the rapid and contradictory social changes brought about by women's (feminist-inspired) entry into the public workforce, and to the less regulated, more varied practices of sexuality and food consumption that characterized the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Brumberg, 1988; Gordon, 2000). However, Helen Malson (1998) has argued against these interpretations, noting that “contradictions in prescribed femininity are hardly new” (p. 95), traditional feminine ideals having contradictorily and confusingly required women to be, for example, sexually restrained, but not too restrained (a ‘prude’), *and* sexually attractive, but not too sexual (a ‘slut’); contradictions that have trapped women within a no-win situation that Marilyn Frye calls the “double-bind” (1983, p. 2). Further, since postmodern (male) theorists have viewed social and self-construction of the natural *male* body with multiple, shifting and possibly contradictory identities as subjectively liberating rather than confusing, it is unclear how similar constructions of the female body could, on their own, be seen or experienced as confusing in ways that might lead to *anorexia*. My approach endeavours to address these anomalies by grounding *anorexia* in the Platonic/Aristotelian misconception of *essence* (or form) as an immaterial, male preserve, followed by Descartes' mind/body split and conception of the natural (female) body as machine, as it impelled the 19<sup>th</sup>/20<sup>th</sup> century feminist (equality) movement and consequent sociocultural reinforcement of heteronormative ideals (via the homosexual taboo), as they shaped the rise and spread of postmodernist/poststructuralist discourses. For this hypothesis recognizes the existence of an originary, spirogenetically essential female self that, through her metaphysically based, sociolinguistically imposed (pubertal) deconstruction and

reconception as Platonic/Cartesian man's good/evil (potentially hysterical) 'Other', has striven in modern, feminist-inspired times to reconstruct and regain her autonomous *subjective* existence and representation. But, in doing so, she realizes that, in what has become a pervasively postmodern Western culture (in which man has reclaimed his Cartesian [feminine] body), her own natural sexual female body is now fluidly invisible and unconstructible. Hence, if she is to continue to exist, the postmodern girl/woman has no alternative but to strive for the newly ideal boyish *form* that will permit access to the realm of phallic (male) subjectivities and identities; an ideal form that is no longer a form of (feminist) resistance, but that is now pursued as a *requirement* for paternally/socially approved access to subjectivity. Once constructed, this boyishly ideal, *pretend* form/self must repressively deny the existence and needs of the (fragmented) essential sexual self, cannot achieve full (phallic) subject status, is always unstable, and, if denied, brings that girl face-to-face with her own symbolic and subjective non-existence. It is this prospect of subjective annihilation that *anorexia* recognizes and evades through its (internally waged) battle for the perfect (desexualized) form. And it is this essential model of *anorexia* that may explain why the ostensibly liberating social construction of girls' bodies with multiple and sometimes contradictory identities may be experienced as confusing and alienating in ways that might result in eating and associated disorders.

For, while the postmodern (metrosexual) man may confidently conceive, experience, and symbolically represent himself as a fully inducted, wholly embodied, thinking, desiring, self-knowing subject who may therefore choose the identities and characteristics with which he is inscribed, thereby avoiding any that may be confusingly disharmonious or contradictory, the postmodern woman may gain limited, imitative access only by erasing her real sexual female self/body, and reconstructing it as the boyishly perfect form/self. This reconstruction perhaps explains why at least 80% of contemporary Western girls/women have taken to dieting, strenuous exercise, laxative use, 'cosmetic' surgery and/or smoking to lose weight, whilst also striving for ever higher qualifications, intellectual/sporting/artistic achievements, and access to previously male only clubs and professions.<sup>50</sup> For a woman who attains the ideal (boyishly slim, muscular, active, intelligent, self-restrained, androgynously attractive) form/function is rewarded with

---

<sup>50</sup> See Soliah (2009). Also, a study of 500 schoolgirls by Mellin, Scully & Irwin (1986) showed that 81% of ten-year-olds had dieted at least once, while a large scale survey by Garner (1997) found that 89% of the women surveyed wanted to lose weight, and 40-50% of the women who smoked did so in order to control their weight.

paternal/social recognition, approval and thus restricted access to the symbolic realm of phallic subjectivities and identities, this access now recognized and confirmed by her interpellation in various local vernaculars as 'guy', 'bro', 'buddy', or 'mate'. But what is repressively shed in this reconstructive process is not just her sexual female body, but the very *existence* and sense of her self as a fully-fledged, wholly embodied, thinking desiring, self-knowing female subject. It is for *this* reason, I suggest, that the social construction and inscription of her pretend self with various phallic subjectivities and identities is (experienced as) contradictory and confusing. For, without (knowledge/concept of) an underlying, persistingly whole, same, integrated female self, there can be little or no self-directed, self-related, experiential choice - and therefore harmonious integration - of subjective identities. Moreover, because this pretend self requires the shedding of one's essentially female thoughts, desires, and feelings in order to boyishly imitate those of the phallic male subject, the identities that a woman *does* inhabit - in being male-defined, and in conceiving her real sexual female body as the fearful, disgustingly uncontrollable 'abyss' of non-existence - may be not just confusingly contradictory but also numbingly alienating from self/others, and thus always uneasy, possibly to the point of 'dis-ease'.

Evidence for postmodern woman's experience of her (re)constructed, multiply identified existence as being confusing and uneasy due to its denial of her essential female self may be found in the writings of Latin American feminist philosopher Maria Lugones (2003). As a woman of colour, Lugones recognizes the performative possibility and liberatory value of always being in and travelling to different social "worlds" where one may accept or reject various ambiguous and contradictory (dominant and nondominant) identities, and thereby become a different person in each 'world', whilst still remembering one's personage in other 'worlds'. In this way, one exists as "a plurality of selves" (p. 93) with no sense of an enduring, underlying self or "I" (p. 89). Whilst this form of playful, loving "world-travelling" permits one to see the world through the eyes of (different) others as subjects of their own world, Lugones admits that it can be a sometimes confusing, uneasy and unhealthy existence. *Confusing*, because one's various identities may conflict (for example, when one is constructed as the [arrogantly perceiving] oppressor in one world, and the oppressed 'Other' in another); *uneasy*, if one is unable to fit or agree with the norms and meanings of, or find love within, a (hostile) 'world'; and *unhealthy*, if one is constructed within a 'world' as seriously and inflexibly unplayful, rather than fluidly and lovingly "playful" (ibid. pp. 90-96). However, the deeper reason for this sense of confusion

and unease, I suggest, is because there *is* for Lugones no (sense/concept of an) essentially whole, integrated female self that underlies, and can therefore create, choose, remember and thus render cohesive, the various identities offered to her. Therefore, unless Lugones accepts and identifies with at least one socially prescribed identity, albeit a possibly derogatory and injurious one, she can, as Butler (1997) also says, have no existence whatsoever. It seems plausible, then, that the “lack of ease” (ibid. p. 93) and the unhealthiness that Lugones experiences in some hostile, agonistic “worlds” may be due, firstly, to this lack of an underlying, essentially unified self, and secondly, to the ever present possibility and fear of collapse of her social identity, and thus, of subjective annihilation; a collapse and resulting state of *existential distress* that may produce the ‘disease’ of *anorexia*. If this is the case, then it is not (Bruch’s) autonomous womanhood, or (Bordo’s) contradictory and confusing feminine ideals, or even (Malson’s) femaleness that gives rise to *anorexia*. Rather, it is the metaphysically based fragmentation and loss of (recognition/love of) the essentially whole, integrated - but now demonically ‘de-formed’ - sexual female self that, in these post-feminist, postmodern times, must be reshaped to imitate the perfect boyish form, in order to gain (paternally approved) access to socially/discursively constructed subjectivity.<sup>51</sup> If unable to attain this ideal form, and therefore condemned to subjective non-existence (by her ‘Eve-il’ sexual self), a girl/woman may have no option but to withdraw within and anorexically punish, purify, deny, desexualize, ‘re-form’, redeem, and thereby ensure the subjective existence of, her essential, but fragmented, demonically sexual, female self.

A girl whose pubertal development signals the approach of womanhood may have already (through familial/social/linguistic inscription) begun to re-perceive and re-conceive her *sexual* female self and desiring body as inferior, imperfect, dirty, and bad, and thus needing to be restrained, hidden, and reshaped into the ideal feminine form if she is to be recognized, loved and accepted. What is required of this girl, then, is to diet, purge, cut, cleanse or otherwise remove from her body and mind all traces of (impure, natural) womanliness in the unrelenting pursuit of an ideally active, slender (and so, visibly self-restrained) androgynously attractive *form* that will show her to look, think, desire, feel and act like a (postmodern) boy, thus ensuring access to the realm of phallic male

---

<sup>51</sup>The idea that a girl experiences a wholeness of being that becomes fragmented through symbolic construction draws upon De Beauvoir’s (1953) theory that, prior to adolescence, a girl experiences and images herself as an *autonomous* individual, before being socially constructed as the sexually objectified ‘Other’.

subjectivities. Having accessed this realm, the girl/woman soon realizes, however, that her place there is conditional upon her maintaining the perfect form/function (and associated identities) in a way that is neither too masculine (or manly), nor too feminine. As former Prime Minister Helen Clark and CEO Christine Rankin<sup>52</sup> discovered, to stray too far either side of the feminine ideal is to imitate phallic male subjectivity either too well, or not well enough, and to therefore invite ostracism (as a 'lesbian' or 'bloke', a 'tart' or 'slut') and even exclusion. But what this boyishly subjectified woman also realizes is that her access to subjectivity must everyday be won anew, not only by maintaining the ideal appearance (form), but by achieving the ideal performance (function), thereby iteratively preserving the perfect, pretend self. But, with seemingly ever more stringent ideals of slimness, youthfulness, and achievement, the pressure and fear of failure to (daily) achieve them may well (self-fulfillingly) result in *actual* failure to gain or maintain access to socially constructed subjectivity, and the prospect, not only of exposure of the demonically sexual female self beneath, but also of the nihilistic abyss that she portends.

It is these realizations, I suggest, that may shift a postmodern girl/woman's (apparent) failure to gain or maintain access to the realm of phallic subjectivities and identities into *anorexia* and other associated disorders (e.g. *depression*, *self-mutilation*), all of which serve as an inner, self-adjudicated desexualizing, defeminizing means of perfect re-formation, redemption, and thus ongoing subjective *survival* of the essential female self. For, as long as that self is metaphysically conceived as without essence or essential properties, and thus, as the formless fluidity that is the source (and downfall) of postmodern man, and as long as the term 'woman' remains metaphor for the feminine 'phallus', the 'will', the 'wisdom', the 'bitch sensuality', or other aspects of his ultimately transcendent becoming, real woman cannot exist as subject.<sup>53</sup> And so, unable to attain or maintain the paternally imposed, boyishly imitative ideals (of appearance and achievement) required for access to socially/discursively (re)constructed subjectivity, the anorexic woman withdraws from the familial/social arena, and turns within to conduct her own battle for the perfect form (and performance) - and thus, for the self recognition and

---

<sup>52</sup> As New Zealand's Prime Minister (1999-2008), Helen Clark was often criticized as being too masculine, this perception often accompanied by rumours of lesbianism. As CEO of Work and Income NZ (1998-2001), Christine Rankin was criticized for her allegedly overly feminine, sexually provocative dress and appearance. See <http://www.stuff.co.nz/national/politics/2607353/The-real-Helen-Clark> and [http://www.nzherald.co.nz/rankin-file/news/article.cfm?c\\_id=758&objectid=197665](http://www.nzherald.co.nz/rankin-file/news/article.cfm?c_id=758&objectid=197665) for these criticisms.

<sup>53</sup> See pp. 73-78 of this thesis for more (Nietzschean/Derridean) examples of traditional philosophical use of 'woman' as metaphor for the proper/improper (or present/lacking) aspects of the phallic male subject.

love - that will ensure her subjective survival. And this battle may be daily waged and won through the ritualized punishment, denial, purification, and erasure of her 'dirty', 'bad' sexual female self/parts, the weight lost, and the gradual emergence of a bony, childish, desexualized form being her measures of success. Sufficiently re-formed, this anorexic woman may one day (and perhaps by maintaining self-purifying rituals) reconstruct a socially or transcendently approved pretend self, or even seek indirect access to subjectivity as the perfect 'wife' or 'mother' of the traditional Cartesian man. In each case the *anorexia* can be shelved, though often to be simply replaced by other (self-denying, purifying) disorders such as *depression*, *obsessive-compulsive disorders*, (work/drug/alcohol) *addictions*, or *hysteria*. She who remains anorexic, however, may eventually lose (or be denied) hope or means of escaping her bad sexual self, and die. Or she may, in maintaining an emaciated, desexualized, purified, childish form (of mind and body), sustain that essential self in the hope that one day, in a space beyond the 'Eve-il' desires and il-logical Forms of Western metaphysics, language and religion, she may be reconceived and reconstituted as essential sexual female subject, thereby taking 'woman' as her name. On this understanding, then, *anorexia* is an urgent battle for *survival* of the essential female self, in the face of failure to attain or maintain a socially/transcendently approved pretend self. And, far from colluding with the familial, social and discursive forces that create and demand this boyish (sexually attractive, fit, muscular, successful, pleasing) ideal self, the anorectic turns her back on them, becoming unattractive, unfit, unwell, emaciated, withdrawn, and unresponsive as she takes control of, re-forms, and thus sustains the existence of what only she knows as the real, original 'me'.

Empirical support for this metaphysical/essential model of *anorexia* as based upon and surviving the (de-formed, demonized) fragmentation and loss of the *essential* sexual female self, and the failure to construct or maintain a perfect, socially approved *pretend* self, can be found in the narratives of currently or previously anorexic women. For example, reflecting on her experience of *anorexia*, Karen Margolis (1988) writes,

I felt as far away from others as the sun is from the earth...Nothing I was, or had achieved seemed sufficient to make them recognise me, at least in the way I wanted...I felt I was trying to cleanse myself of extraneous matter, trying to reach the internal *essence* that had become obscured by my image of myself and as others saw me. (p. 20, my emphasis)

For Margolis, the ‘internal essence’ is the original self, the “real me” (p. 73), as she had experienced, known, and now remembered it, but which had become obscured and alienated as she learnt to re-perceive and re-imagine that self through phallic male eyes as the sexually impure, voraciously “devouring female”; an image that, despite personal and professional achievement, she could not escape. Margolis’ interpretation of her *anorexia* therefore fits with the metaphysical model presented here, in that her (daily) reconstruction of the perfect, paternally/socially approved *pretend* self only kept fragmented and alienated her essential (impurely sexual) female self, her *anorexia* then desexualizing, cleansing, and reforming that essential self.

Malson (1998) lends further support to this metaphysical/essence model of *anorexia* when she highlights the anorectic’s association of the onset of menstruation with “emotionality, sexuality, vulnerability, danger and lack of control” (p. 117), the *amenorrhea* associated with *anorexia* therefore signifying a refusal of these attributes that mark her and her developing body as sexual, uncontrollable, and thus, bad. Says her interviewee, Teresa, “It [*anorexia*] was about not having feelings, not having periods, not being...emotional, not being vulnerable...I was very asexual” (ibid.). Here, the anorexic self is the desexualized, desensitized and therefore purified, protected, childish *female* self. Similarly, to the anorexic Elaine, the ideally slim, petite woman is seen as having a boyishly childlike, powerless and dependent form in comparison to the powerful form of ‘big’, ‘muscular’ and ‘protective’ men. As she puts it,

women are always...portrayed so petite...not even like little girls. They’re portrayed like little boys...Men are always like this muscular...big...almost to make one protective over the other. (ibid. p. 114)

Thus, for the anorectic, the attainment of the socially prescribed ideal form/function that initially promised inclusive liberation and empowerment ultimately reveals itself to be exclusionary and disempowering, since it is an (ever more stringent) male-defined ideal imposed onto a woman’s body that requires her to remain (like Peter Pan) in a *boyish* state of immaturity and dependency, as opposed to postmodern man’s ascendancy to (supposedly) mature, enlightened, autonomous subjectivity. With both social and anorexic ideals requiring the erasure of the sexual, womanly self, this perfect postmodern woman might well be seen as the 20<sup>th</sup> century manifestation of Aristotle’s (1953) pronouncement that “a boy is like a woman in form, and the woman is as it were, an impotent male”.



Stripped of her own essential form, this woman's very existence depends upon her social - or anorexic - manifestation of the perfectly boyish, childish form.

Final evidence for this understanding of *anorexia* as the existentially necessary *erasure* and desexualized reformation of the (demonically de-formed) essential sexual female self can be found in the anorectic's inability to see, feel or otherwise perceive her sexual female body and associated emotions, feelings and desires. In a multicultural study that linked oppression-based trauma to body/eating problems, Becky Thompson (1994) found that many African-American, Latina and lesbian women who develop eating problems following racial or sexual trauma do not imagine or "see themselves as having bodies at all" (p. 16). For these women, *anorexia*, *bulimia* or *obesity* promises erasure of and escape from the dark, bad, sexual (menstruating) female body, and from the feelings of guilt, shame and pain associated with it. As Teresa said, "It [anorexia] was about not having feelings" (Malson, 1998, p. 117). And, as Nicki says of the time that her periods began, "I sort of saw my body as a separate thing, like it wasn't me...I wanted to sort of distance myself from it" (ibid. p. 118). The essential sexual female body, in signifying only badness, impurity, guilt and shame, must, as a matter of survival, become numbed, invisible, and even non-existent to familialy/socially and anorexically reconstructed selves alike.

### **Other 'Forms' of Survival**

This metaphysical/essence model of *anorexia* as a (perfect) 'form' of subjective survival accounts not only for the various symptoms, experiences and theories of *anorexia*, but also for its relation to, and differentiation from, other mental disorders such as *bulimia*, (morbid) *obesity* and *hysteria*. For these disorders may also be interpreted as a survival response to the de-formation, fragmentation and (repressive) loss of the essential sexual female self, a *pathological* de-formation that, rooted in the Platonic/Aristotelian 'man/woman' dualism, may therefore be historically related - and hence relate these contemporary disorders - to the ancient Greek concept and manifestation of *hysteria*. Just as the ancient Greek physician *Hippocrates* saw a dry 'wandering' (demonically possessed) womb as the cause of the loss of appetite and/or breath, and the loss of - or excessive - movement that characterize *hysteria*, so did some 19<sup>th</sup> century physicians perceive the dry, 'unused' womb (especially of unmarried women) as the cause of the *hysteria* that gripped epidemic numbers of Victorian women, its treatment therefore

requiring manual penetration and stimulation of the sexual organs. Freud (1953), however, viewed the symptoms of *hysteria* as the somatic effects of psychic conflicts in which forbidden, feared sexual sensations, meanings and libido are repressively *transferred* from the sexual regions of the body (and body image) onto other non-sexual organs or zones, and expressed via hysterical symptoms (e.g. constrictions of the throat, breathing, and movement). Although noting that most of the hysterics that he studied were highly intelligent, energetic and creative women, Freud failed to make any connection between that observation and the fact that these women were (after schooling) expected to assume the submissive feminine role of isolated, dependent, monotonous domesticity (Bordo, 1993, p. 158). However, first wave feminist, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, in experiencing the depression, weakness, hallucinations and nervous collapse symptomatic of *hysteria*, directly related these symptoms to the culturally defined feminine role of isolated and immobilized domesticity imposed upon those approaching womanhood (ibid). This modern form of *hysteria* can therefore be related to its ancient form via the Platonic/Cartesian ‘man/woman’ dualism that has continued to conceive woman in inferior, posterior and ‘pure/impure’ relation to man as essential subject, hysterical symptoms expressing (fear of exposure of) the repressed, demonically desiring female self, or its suffocation by objectifying, silencing, feminine ideals and roles. And the 19<sup>th</sup> century epidemic of *hysteria* may then be explained by noting that the ‘first wave’ of Anglo-American feminist activism (including the women’s suffrage movement) and the desire of many women to enter the public sphere saw the socio-cultural *reinforcement* of heterosexual norms and ideals of (submissive) femininity and (dominant) masculinity, a reinforcement facilitated by the discursive construction, pathologization, and criminalization of the *homosexual* individual and identity. Further, the same reinforcement of repressive, immobilizing feminine ideals that led to the 19<sup>th</sup> century epidemic can also be equated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century *hysteria* or the “problem that had no name” that Betty Friedan (1965, p. 17) identified in post-war American housewives socially and morally coerced into returning to dependent, isolated, ideal-driven domesticity having tasted the independence and camaraderie of participation in the wartime workforce.<sup>54</sup>

Whilst both ancient and modern forms of *hysteria* (and the characteristic paralysis, muteness and fits) can therefore be seen as a response to the Platonic/Augustinian binary

---

<sup>54</sup> Psychiatrist Frazer McDonald identified the same problem in post-war N.Z. housewives as ‘suburban neurosis’.

conception - and the more recently intensified cultural inscription - of woman and her sexual body as either the pure, restrained, properly domesticated aspect, or the impure, improper, sexually uncontrolled aspect of man (i.e. as the exalted Mary, or the fallen Eve), the 20<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> century phenomenon of *anorexia* cannot be explained by this model for one very good reason. As Pierre Beumont (2007) notes, the current epidemics of *anorexia* and *bulimia* are occurring,

in societies in which women have come closest to achieving equal rights, and there is an almost perfect opposition between countries with [a] high female illiteracy rate and those with a high prevalence of the disease.

Thus, while feminist theory and activism has freed many women from their oppressed, appropriated state of cloistered domesticity, thereby theoretically lessening the risk and occurrence of hysterical disorders (such as *conversion disorder* and *agoraphobia*), the increasing incidence of *anorexia* has corresponded with postmodern woman's entry into the public realm of (phallic) male subjectivities, (uni-formed) identities, and their norms and ideals. It cannot therefore be the traditional binary conception and definition of (real) woman as the sexually objectified, passively submissive, feminine 'Other' that motivates *anorexia*, but rather, and even worse, her complete loss of any subjective, symbolic or material definition or existence whatsoever, as the result of the postmodern male subject's reclamation of feminine embodiment, thereby reducing real, sexual woman to his dark 'shadow'. Her (fragmented) non-existence being the condition of his existence, the essential, sexual womanly self is no more than the formless fluidity of the "infinite, undifferentiated plenum" (Frye, 1996, p. 1000) that is the fearfully unknowable, uncontrollable realm of Aristotle's 'non-man', of Augustine's sinful, potentially feminizing desire, of Descartes' disdainfully uncontrolled passions, of Nietzsche's mad, phallus-wielding, man-eating, Dionysian 'maenads', of Derrida's essence-less, potentially engulfing 'abyss', and of Baudelaire's 'abominable' appetites. Is it any wonder then, that a postmodern pubescent girl might flee from approaching womanhood by doing all in her power to diet, run, slice or otherwise slough off her sexual female body and strive for the ideal boyish form (and functions), in order to attain even false, limited, and uncertain access to the symbolic order of phallic subjectivities and identities? And if this access is denied or revealed as no more than an endlessly self-denying, ever more demanding masquerade, is it any wonder that she might seek this perfect form (and thus, subjective existence) through the self-adjudicated anorexic punishment, purification and erasure of

her dirty, disgusting, sexual womanly self? It seems, therefore, that *anorexia* may be the subjective female self's *prophylaxis* against the fatal 'dis-ease' of (post-feminist, postmodern) womanhood; this understanding of *anorexia* as a 'form' of subjective *survival* also permitting its etiological and conceptual correlation with the more recent (and increasing) occurrences of *bulimia* and *obesity* in girls/women, and *anorexia* in boys/men.

For, while the anorectic may ritually deny nourishment to, enforce exercise upon, and cleanse (e.g. with laxatives) her dirty, bad sexual self, thereby punishing, purifying and earning a daily measure of (desexualizing, reforming) goodness for that self, the bulimic girl/woman may *binge* to comfort or engorge the starving self, but then, through immediate *purging*, punish, purify, and ultimately deny nourishment to that self, thereby similarly pursuing the perfect, desexualized form. Both therefore gain the modicum of goodness, (self-)recognition and approval required for the ongoing existence of the (bad) essential self. Having similarly failed to achieve the socially prescribed ideal, boyishly slim feminine form, the *obese* girl/woman does not starve, purge, or cut away the dirtiness, badness, and shame of her (fragmented, alienated) sexual female self, but rather, may conceal, protect, and comfort it with layers of desexualizing, and thus purifying, reforming consumption. In addition, the only recent appearance of *bulimia nervosa* as a clinically recognized (Western) disorder, along with the increasing incidence of *anorexia* and *obesity*, may be explained by Gordon's observation that the ideal female form has become progressively thinner and more "tubular" during the last fifty years, making it even *more* difficult, if not impossible, to attain (2000, p. 120).<sup>55</sup> Unable to reconstruct their fragmented, alienated essential self to fit this ideal, tubularly androgynous form, it may be expected that an increasing number of girls/women will use food as their means to achieve the desexualized, defeminized, childish *anorexic* form that ensures their own recognition, love, and thus, sustenance of the essential self. Hence, the question to be urgently answered, then, is: Just why *is* the ideal female form becoming ever thinner and more tubularly androgynous?

Richard Gordon (2000, p. 121) suggests that this ideal form or standard of female attractiveness is largely created and imposed by men, as evidenced by the increasingly thin and tubular appearance of *Playboy* centrefolds, beauty pageant winners, and perhaps most

---

<sup>55</sup> Gordon's (2000) observation is confirmed by New Zealand studies indicating a similar reduction in size and weight of the ideal female form during the last fifty years (De Ras, 1997, p. 112).

obviously, of the catwalk models idolized by so many young girls/women. The female body most attractive to the postmodern metrosexual man, then, is the body that is ever less sexually female, and ever more boyishly androgynous - to the point where the currently most perfect model of women's couture is actually a boy.<sup>56</sup> So why should this be the case? The answer may lie in what I have posited as the conditions of existence of the (Foucauldian/Derridean) postmodern male subject. The dandy/metrosexual's attainment of aesthetically self-cultivated, enlightened subjectivity requires visible subjugation of the immoderate female desire (to submit) that has traditionally characterized - and thus excluded from subjectivity - the 'Eve-il', de-formed, fluidly uncultivable sexual woman. As the fluid source, the metaphorical properties, and the existential limit of the postmodern/metrosexual male subject's appropriately restrained (i.e. non-fatal) feminine form, real sexual woman does not and cannot exist. Thus, the ever thinner, younger, and more boyish ideal form required of postmodern woman ensures her real/symbolic *non-existence*, whilst re-presenting her taught, tubular, always boyish body as the fetishized vehicle for the aesthetic sublimation of the dandy/metrosexual man's irrepressible desire to submit, thereby ensuring his retention of the phallus, and thus, his enduring, fluidly embodied *existence*. A fluidity that does not, however, mean the unrestrained expression of equally valued, bi-sexual identities, but that, following Heraclitus, requires the visible masculine (rational) dominance and disciplined definition of feminine (bodily) qualities/desires. Hence, when Derrida seeks to 'become feminine', it is only a (heterosexual) male-defined and chastely restrained, boyishly feminine embodiment that he desires and ideally requires for the construction of phallic subjectivity. And it is the ever-increasing difficulty, if not impossibility, to attain and maintain this ideal, ever more boyishly androgynous form that may explain the increasing incidence of eating disorders not only in girls/women, but also in boys/men. Moreover, recent studies of *anorexia* in the latter have shown gay, bisexual and transgender men to be at far higher risk of eating disorders than heterosexual men,<sup>57</sup> a factor plausibly explained by their (self-) conception and perception as passively and de-formingly *feminized*, and thus, like real, demonically

---

<sup>56</sup> Bosnian-born Australian boy Andrej Pejic (19) is currently the most acclaimed women's fashion model due to his "impossibly skinny...flat-chested, snake-hipped figure" (Williamson, 2011).

<sup>57</sup> Meyer & Feldman (2007) found that >15% of gay/bisexual and <5% heterosexual men had experienced an eating disorder. For Carolan & Redmond (2003), it was 19% of gay/bisexual boys/men and 57% of transgendered youth.

sexual *woman*, excluded from subjectivity.<sup>58</sup> But what this metaphysical/essence model of anorexia cannot, on its own, explain, is the intrafamilial aspect of the disorder.

For *anorexia* has also been identified as an *inheritable* disorder that is often passed from mother to daughter(s). This feature has led to its biomedical interpretation as a *genetic* disorder, a view that fails to account for the sex, race, culture, and class specific nature of *anorexia*. For, even where *anorexia* has been found to exist in non-white or non-Western cultures, and also in lesbian women, this occurrence has been linked with the global spread of, and desire to attain, the Western, white, heterosexual ideal of slenderness as it represents beauty, success and upward mobility (Bordo, 1993; Thompson, 1994, 1996). To explain the inheritable nature of *anorexia*, cultural theorist Charles Shepherdson (2000) looks to Freudian/Lacanian theories of psychosexual development, as viewed through the feminist psychoanalytic lenses of Luce Irigaray and Eugénie Lemoine-Luccioni, in order to interpret *anorexia*, not as a genetic disorder, but as the result of a symbolic distortion of the developing *psyche* that is unconsciously passed from mother to daughter via the medium of the female *body*.

Like Aristotle, Freud (1953, vol. 19) understood mind and body to be inextricably entwined, the mind developing from the imprinting of bodily drives - and particularly the core sexual drive or *libido* - onto the unconscious, immaterial surface of the brain and body. But, because the mind is also inevitably shaped by the constant perception of external, sociolinguistic stimuli, the development of subjectivity and sexual identity is not just a biological, but also a psychical and symbolic process in which the development of a masculine or feminine identity is determined by the presence or absence of the penis/phallus respectively. Employing the Greek tragedy *Oedipus Rex*<sup>59</sup> as a model for understanding the process of psychosexual development of the conscious (male) self or *ego*, Freud sees this process as initially involving three stages: the 'oral', the 'anal' and the 'Oedipal' (or phallic). In the oral and anal stages, the infant initially experiences itself and its mother as an indistinguishable unity, but then, in experiencing her absence, begins to

---

<sup>58</sup> This correlation of eating disorders in men with their perception as fluidly feminized and thus excluded from subjectivity correlates with the traditional Maori belief that mental illness in men as due to their (feminizing) penetration/possession by evil spirits or *kahukahu* (Best, 1904, p. 26).

<sup>59</sup> In Sophocles' tragedy, an oracle tells Oedipus, son of King Laius and Queen Jacosta, that he will "Mate with his own mother, and shed with his own hands the blood of his own sire." Despite all attempts to avoid it, Oedipus unwittingly fulfills the prophecy, Jacosta then hanging herself and Oedipus blinding himself in shame.

psychically separate from the mother and develop its own sense (and image) of an active, unified self (Malson, 1998). In the Oedipal stage of development, the child, in becoming aware that the mother lacks a penis, perceives her as a castrated male who therefore *lacks* the power and privilege that the father *has*, her castration seen as a form of punishment for sexual wrongdoing (e.g. masturbation). The child therefore repressively repudiates the (bad) pre-Oedipal mother/female, projectively reconceiving her as the passive *object* (or ‘Other’) of the active, dominant, paternal *subject’s* desire, possession and control. In withdrawing his/her (desire for) subjective love and attention from the objectified (m)other,<sup>60</sup> the child redirects it towards the phallically privileged father, wishing to *submit* his/herself (and libidinal desires) to the father’s disciplinary will and control, in order to gain his (identificatory) love and approval. Forbidden by Paternal Law (the incest taboo) from taking his (m)other as the object of his (now dominatory) sexual desire, the boy *represses* and projects that desire onto girls, thereby averting the threat of castration, inheriting the Phallus, and thus gaining entry into the socio-symbolic order that constructs and represents him as autonomous (heterosexual) subject. For this subject, the (moral) Law of the Father is thereafter internalized as the *super-ego* (or conscience) that, through its constant regulatory control of the aggressive libidinal drives and instincts of the *id*, ensures the autonomous, socio-linguistically ordered and approved existence of the phallically privileged, conscious male self or *ego* (1953, vol. 19).

Freud describes the girl child as initially driven by the same aggressively masculine libido as the boy. In the Oedipal stage, however, the girl realizes that, like her (m)other, she too has been castrated (for wrong-doing), and must therefore be inferior, lacking, and imperfect compared to her perfect phallic father/brother. She therefore rejects her (m)other as love-object and masochistically submits her own will/desires to those of the dominant, disciplinary father, thereby gaining his (object) love and thus indirect access to (otherwise denied) phallic subjectivity and power (Rubin, 2000). Like her (m)other, then, the daughter relinquishes active, desiring *subject* status and becomes a passive, phallic *object* of male desire, ownership, control and (intersubjective) exchange, never thereafter to be “the subject of her own desire” (Benjamin, 1990, p. 88), or, for that matter, her own thoughts, feelings or actions. Rather, in being psychically and symbolically constructed, projected, and represented as an external sexual object, ‘woman’ and her feminine/maternal body are

---

<sup>60</sup> Here I use the term ‘(m)other’ to distinguish the real, biological, pre-Oedipal ‘mother’ from the phallically related Oedipal image and definition of the ‘(m)other’ as a ‘castrated’ subjugated sexual object.

equated with all things *physical*, in opposition to the equation of masculinity with the *metaphysical*. In this way, Freud describes the psychosexual process by which boys are biologically and socially destined to become what De Beauvoir (1953) calls the Aristotelian *essential*, autonomously defined “Absolute”, while girls become the *inessential*, relationally defined “Other” (p. 16), through the paternally enforced repression and displacement of libidinal drives and instincts. And because these drives may be repressively displaced onto other objects/functions in order to gain the object-love of the father, these primal desires – whether for food, liquid, or (pre-Oedipal) maternal love – acquire a symbolic meaning and an alternative form of (conscious) expression that distances them from their original biological (sexual) meaning and function. For Freud (1953), then, the regulatory repression of forbidden libidinal desires is a necessary aspect of the normal psychosexual development of the self/ego, conscious fears and anxieties caused by these repressed desires/fantasies being allayed through their socially acceptable (often neurotic, ritualistic) sublimation. It is only when the desires *cannot* be sublimated in this way that psychosomatic disorders (e.g. *hysteria*) or psychoses (e.g. *schizophrenia*) may develop, the former allowing survival of the ego/identity through somatic expression of forbidden desires, the latter representing a chaotic overwhelming of the ego by those desires and anxieties, and thus, its detachment from reality (vol. 5, p. 202).

Anti-essentialist psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1977a) takes this Freudian model of psychosexual development and endeavours to remove it from notions of fixed, biologically determined, singular and unified subjectivity. He does this, firstly, by reconceiving conscious *subjectivity* as a purely illusory *linguistic* construction, and secondly, by reconceiving the language that constructs the conscious mind as having no fixed, referential meanings. For Lacan sees language as composed of chains of ‘signifiers’ that, in having no conceptual or material referent, gain their unstable and always shifting meaning from the central signifier, the Phallus, and from their relation to other signifiers. Because Lacan sees the Phallus and the subjectivity it constructs as having no referent, both can supposedly be taken up by boy or girl, and both present the possibility of multiple and always fluidly signified subjectivities. Paralleling Freud’s oral, anal and Oedipal stages, Lacan posits Real, Imaginary and Symbolic stages of development, the child’s illusory image of a whole, complete self or “ideal ego” (ibid. p. 158) forming in the Imaginary stage, and sexually differentiated subjectivity being attained, by boys at least, through (promise of) receipt of the Phallus, and thus, entry into and construction by the Symbolic



order of social law, language and exchange. But, as feminist theorists such as Grosz (1990, p. 105) and Irigaray (1985a, p. 67) have argued, in denying any semantic connection between the Phallus and the penis, Lacan is then unable to explain firstly, why the Phallus should hold its privileged position as transcendental signifier and bestower of subjectivity; secondly, why only those with a penis are seen as having the Phallus (and thus granted subjectivity and masculine sexual identity); thirdly, why the female body should be seen as 'castrated'; and lastly, why it is only the *female* body that becomes the symbolic Phallus that the male subject desires. It seems, therefore, that Lacan's supposedly de-essentializing theory implicitly depends upon the same phallogocentrically essentialist assumption that underpins the writings of Derrida and Foucault: Only 'man' can have the Phallus that ensures construction, definition, and enduring, privileged existence as Symbolic subject, whilst metaphorical 'woman' is the phallic signifier with which the Lacanian male subject is constituted and constitutes his (language based) world. Consequently, real sexual woman remains outside the symbolic realm, banished to the unconscious, semiotic realm of forbidden, repressed and thus ever threatening drives and desires, as the condition of man's entry into subjectivity.

However, Irigaray extends her critique of the Freudian/Lacanian model of psychosexual development in asserting that, because the boy's developmental process requires the paternally enforced separation from the real mother, followed by the sexual objectification and repression of (desire for) the Oedipal (m)other, it therefore involves a *repudiation* of the maternal/female that *precludes* rather than assists the attainment of mature, sexually differentiated subjectivity. The intervention of paternal law can therefore be seen as interrupting the development of sexed selfhood, firstly, through the breaking of the primary bond of love between (Real) mother and child; secondly, through the child's (Imaginary) separation from and repressive forgetting of the real mother/woman (Symbolically identified as the voraciously engulfing female); and thirdly, through his sexual objectification, forbidden desire for, and thus, repressive renunciation of the Symbolic (m)other. Because the mother/child bond is transformed (through paternal intervention) into a sadomasochistic bond of (masculine) dominance and (feminine) submission, the son must femininely submit to the will of the dominant Father in order to receive his love, approval, and therefore, the phallus. Because inter-subjective love and recognition can thereafter only be received from and given to the Father or other male subjects, the only intersubjective *sexual* love/desire that the phallic male subject may experience is that of

and from other men, paternal law demanding the redirection of submissive and incestuous desires. It is for this reason that Irigaray recasts supposedly 'heterosexual' Western economies of exchange (of love, recognition, property, etc.) as purely "hom(m)osexual" economies in which girls/women are the phallic objects of sexual exchange that mediate the bonds of identificatory love between male subjects (1985b, p. 43). For, in adapting the Oedipal story, Freud fails to mention *Laius'* rapacious love for the boy/man *Chrysippus* (Balmory, 1982), a love that, in resulting in the latter's suicide, conveys to all phallically initiated boys the need to repressively project their lustful desires away from the paternal phallus and - under modern taboos against homosexuality and paedophilia - onto the (veiled) female as phallic object. In this case, mature, autonomous, sexually differentiated subjectivity is unachievable, the sexually immature subject forever enslaved by, fearing, and violently projecting his forbidden desires onto an external feminine (potentially feminizing) object world. Irigaray's interpretation of the paternally ordered Oedipal/Symbolic process as an *interruption* of the development of sexually differentiated subjectivity therefore permits a feminist psychoanalytic account of what Scheman (1993) sees as the Cartesian perception, knowledge and control of natural bodies according to the (heterosexual) male subject's 'logic of male homophobia', as well as Derrida's attempt to subdue that phobia by invoking 'woman' as the phallus that cannot be lost. As the universal Oedipal man, the Cartesian subject achieves rational subjectivity only by detaching from and controlling his needy sexual mind/body, his perceptions and actions thereafter shaped by sadomasochistic desire and its constant repression and sublimation in obedience to the inner voice/Law of the real and Symbolic Father. For the girl child, however, masochistic subjugation to the will and Law of the Father brings not even a split, fearful, dependent form of subjectivity.

Irigaray argues that because the once powerful mother comes to be seen as a lacking, inferior, castrated male, the perfectly whole image (or ideal ego) formed in Lacan's Imaginary stage of development in both boy and girl can only be a *male* image. With 'woman' reduced to metaphor for the phallic signifier that constructs and inscribes man as "all", real women are rendered "unrepresentable" (1985b, p. 253) within both the Imaginary order and the Symbolic realm of language, meaning and subjectivity. For Lacan, it is the essence of real sexual woman to be the "not all" that is the condition of man's inscription as "all", and, as such, she does not and cannot exist. As he puts it, "There is no such thing as The woman since of her essence having already risked the term, why think

twice about it? – of her essence, she is not all” (1982, p. 144). Thus, while male subjects can occupy the subject-position ‘woman’, and, says Lacan, be “just as good as women” (ibid. p. 147), women cannot occupy the subject-position ‘man’, for real women have no subjective existence within the phallic function, and cannot therefore be symbolically inscribed as either male or female subject. Because woman is therefore denied both Imaginary and Symbolic existence, the supposed psychosexual *development* of female selfhood is, for Irigaray, a process of psychic and symbolic *mal-development* in which the separation of daughter from mother is prevented due to their inability to create (Imaginary) limits/form for their own female body/desire (1991, p. 108). Dependent upon the mother (and then father) for her (objectified) definition, identity, and protection, the daughter is thus denied any form of (inter)subjective expression, recognition or love. Hence, where Freud views psychosomatic disorders as *isolated* physical expressions of unresolved psychic conflicts or repressed memories/fantasies, Irigaray’s interpretation of the Freudian/Lacanian model of self-development as actually resulting in failure to develop autonomous, sexually specific subjectivity permits a psychoanalytic understanding of *anorexia* that meshes, with and adds generalized psychic and intrafamilial dimensions to, the metaphysical/essence model posited here.

In applying Irigaray’s critique of the Freudian/Lacanian models of psychosexual development to Lemoine-Luccioni’s clinical studies of *anorexia*, Shepherdson (2000) interprets *anorexia* as the extreme psychosomatic expression of woman’s inability to either imagine or symbolically construct and represent her self as a wholly embodied, desiring, speaking, female subject. But for Shepherdson, this inherited inability does not have genetic origins. Rather, it is Symbolically created and imposed upon the developing female psyche, when the phallic (lack of) significance of the term ‘woman’ and thus, the symbolic non-existence of the sexual female body is passed from (m)other to daughter as a “*symbolic inheritance*” (p. 12) that, unable to be spoken, is unconsciously transmitted “at the level of the flesh” (p. 18). Because the term ‘woman’ has no (real or imaginary) subjective referent/meaning, it cannot be used to subjectively signify, construct or give *limits* to the sexual female body. And so, what silently passes from mother to daughter is the inability to perceive, conceptualize, or cultivate (into subjectivity) her therefore unlimited, uncontrollable sexual female body, and thus, the existential need to seek fixed, male-related definition and identity (e.g. as ‘wife’, ‘mother’ or ‘psychologist’). But what unconsciously persists, and what may - if these identities become unstable - then find

psycho-somatic expression as *anorexia*, is the unimaginable, unspeakable, symbolically inherited question: “Am I a man or a woman?” (ibid. p. 19). For, says Shepherdson, it is the linguistic signifier (or identity) of a body that gives it limits, and therefore, a (self-) perceivable presence. Therefore, denied (subjective) signification by the term ‘woman’, and also denied access to the symbolic realm of phallic male-related identities, the developing female psyche cannot give limits to, and therefore seemingly *lacks* a body from which to cultivate autonomous subjectivity. It is this lack that the anorectic/hysteric experiences - but also passionately *rejects* - firstly by sloughing off her sexual, womanly parts and being the “little girl”; secondly, by imagining (and adoring) a whole, pure, perfect, *maternal form* (e.g. the Madonna) that seemingly presents an answer to the question, “What is Woman?” (ibid. p. 24); and thirdly, by striving to be a woman by assuming an identity - such as ‘mother’ - that implies womanhood, “as though mother and woman were one and the same” (ibid. p. 17). In this way, Shepherdson presents a feminist psychoanalytic account of *anorexia* that concurs with Thompson’s (1994) assertion that many anorexics experience themselves as lacking a body and the feelings that go with it. However, this account fails to explain other empirically identified features of the disorder.

Although this feminist psychoanalytic approach to *anorexia* presents a non-genetic, generalized account of its inheritability in interpreting the disorder as the extreme manifestation of a symbolically imposed, maternally transmitted disruption of self-development, its Freudian/Lacanian origins prevent this approach from associating *anorexia* with the existence of an essentially formed (or limited) subjective self that pre-exists symbolic construction, and that is de-formed (or de-limited) by the term ‘woman’. And yet, it is (alienation from) this essential self to which Margolis relates her *anorexia*, and that is denied not only by Freud and Lacan, but all philosophers from Heraclitus and Plato to the present day, so that only the male form may be constructible into subjectivity. And it is the loss of unconditional inter-subjective existence, (maternal) recognition and love of this self/form that may explain the daughter’s need to submit (now unruly drives) to the Law, will and ideals of the (real/social) Father, and, in failing to achieve his ideal form, her anorexic need to imagine (and be) the perfect child/maternal form. In addition, if this essential self is a wholly *spirogenetic* self, as I hypothesize, then *anorexia* may well have a genetic aspect, but only insofar as it is the symbolically imposed, pathological fragmentation of this self that creates the disintegrated, dysfunctional psychosomatic foundations (the limitless self/body) for the possible occurrence of *anorexia*. Whilst the

increasing prevalence of eating disorders can be partly explained by the paternal/social imposition of ever slimmer, more boyishly androgynous, and thus ever less attainable feminine ideals,<sup>61</sup> this feminist psychoanalytic approach to *anorexia/bulimia* permits further (and intrafamilial) explanation of the increase inasmuch as these disorders respond to a perceived inability to escape one's 'Eve-il' *sexual* female self.

Although Freud later modified his theory that many of his *hysterical* patients had experienced actual childhood sexual abuse (reinterpreting this abuse as childhood fantasy), subsequent research indicates that his initial theory was most likely correct (Bordo, 1993). In addition, recent clinical studies have suggested that around 50-60% of anorexic girls/women have experienced childhood physical, sexual or other abuse, with up to 80% of that sexual abuse thought to be incestuous (Sheinberg & Fraenkel, 2001; Delys, 2007, Bulik, 2001). This close correlation of abuse with *anorexia/bulimia* leads Thompson (1994) to describe eating disorders as a *survival* response to sexual, racial, homophobic, or other *traumatic* events. For a girl who is experiencing or has experienced sexual or other abuse, escape from her bad, shameful sexual female self/body may be (or seem) almost or totally impossible, especially if she is blamed and/or blames herself for the abuse. This is particularly the case with incestuous abuse, for example, with Greek and Māori mythologies and Biblical scriptures implying that the daughter (of *Zeus*, *Tāne* and *Lot*) must bear the blame, guilt and shame (and for *Persephone* and *Hinetitama*, the price of death) for supposedly tempting her father into sexual relations.<sup>62</sup> Thus, with rates of childhood sexual/incestuous abuse reportedly (and dramatically) increasing over the past 30 years,<sup>63</sup> it would seem that the postmodern paternal/social ideals of pure, self-restrained femininity can only become ever less attainable for an increasing number of girls/women, a factor that - along with the ever more stringent ideals - may explain the recent increase in incidence and prevalence of eating disorders. The psychoanalytic correlation of eating disorders with various forms of childhood trauma does not, however, account for the remaining 40-50% of cases of *anorexia* that seemingly do not involve abuse, nor does it explain why *all* girls/women exposed to trauma do not then develop eating disorders. But, if this correlation of abuse and eating disorders is situated within the broader context of the metaphysical/essence model of *anorexia*, then childhood abuse appears to be simply the

---

<sup>61</sup> See pp. 139-140 for explication of Gordon's (2000) observations of current ideals of femininity.

<sup>62</sup> See *Genesis:19; Tikanga Māori* (Mead, 2003, p. 245); and <http://www.theoi.com/Khthonios/Persephone.html#Zeus>

<sup>63</sup> See Sheinberg and Fraenkel (2001); CYF New Zealand (2005).

physical/emotional enforcement of the (Aristotelian/Freudian) Symbolic Law of the Father that, in denying, sexually objectifying and denigrating the essential female self, causes its psychosomatic fragmentation and guilty, shameful repression, thereby breaking the bond of mother/child love, and requiring the daughter's masochistic submission to the father's will/control. On this basis, *anorexia* is the result of a metaphysical/symbolic inheritance not just from the (m)other, but also from the real, Symbolic, religious, philosophic, and psychoanalytic father(s), psychoanalytic theory revealing itself not as a cure, but rather, as a perpetuator of the pathological basis for eating disorders: the loss of the essential female self. Situated within this context of paternal subjugation and control, Bruch's (2001, p. 55) description of the anorectic as experiencing her body as controlled by external forces, or as having inside her a ghostly "dictator who dominates me", a "little man who objects when I eat" seems perfectly understandable. And, in interpreting *anorexia* as an inner battle for the perfect, lovable *form* and thus *survival* of the essential (demonically) sexual female self, this metaphysical model also echoes Thompson's reading of *anorexia* as a mode of survival, along with Margolis' interpretation of her own *anorexia* as encapsulated in the words "So you could say I starved for love" (1988, p. 73). But this metaphysically based, parentally transmitted model also permits inclusive and coherent explanation of the *historical* manifestations of *anorexia*.

For it relates contemporary manifestations and features of the disorder to what Rudolph Bell (1985) identifies as the "*holy anorexia*" manifest in some medieval Christian saintly women, and to what Brumberg (1988) identifies as the "*anorexia mirabilis*" perceived in the "fasting girls" of 18<sup>th</sup> century Europe. Just as the Lacanian Symbolic Father commits the essential womanly self to non-existence, and demands the daughter's attainment of the perfect boyish form to earn his approval and imitative access to symbolic subjectivity, so the Christian transcendent Father demands self-mortifying punishment, denial, and erasure of her (soulless) 'Eve-il' sexual female self/body, so that the medieval holy woman may, like Jesus, achieve union with, and receive the charismatic 'Word' of, God the Father. Thus, in starving herself, the 16-year-old visionary, Catherine of Siena, cast off her own sexual female flesh, and, in consuming the eucharistic flesh and blood of God, purified and masculinized mind and body, thereby persuading the Holy Fathers that, like Jesus, she had resisted and overcome sinful desires (for Satan's fruit), and was therefore a worthy recipient and voice for God's charisms. But Catherine's entry into the holy order also depended upon the support of higher male clergy who, in verifying her visions to be a sign

of Godly transcendence (rather than demonic madness), enabled her conditional, imitative access to the sanctified realm of God-fearing, ascetically self-purifying holy men (Bell, 1985). Ongoing access therefore depended upon the ongoing and visible transcendence and erasure of Catherine's (soulless) womanly self and (uncontrollable) female desires, a transcendence achieved and demonstrated via a refusal of food that ultimately resulted in *anorexia*. Like the contemporary anorectic then, Catherine's *anorexia* and resulting death can be seen to result from the biblically imposed denial, (demonic) de-formation, and erasure of the essential sexual female self, and the (traditional role-rejecting) pursuit of the perfectly self-controlled, pure, childish form that is her ticket to transcendent (male-imitative) subjectivity. Fearing the inevitable failure to perform (i.e. to survive on God's word alone), Catherine retreated to the "cell in the interior of her soul, whence she resolved never to come forth", where she could remain the perfect (anorexic) subject, recognized and loved by the perfect father (Jesus) and mother (Mary) till death.<sup>64</sup> Similarly, the 'fasting girl' of 18th century Europe escaped the subjective non-existence portended by (de-forming) womanhood, using starvation to reshape herself into the perfectly pure, desexualized, childish form that, seemingly miraculously able to survive without food or fluids, was therefore (like male mystics) seen as able to transcend (potentially sinful) bodily appetites and desires. Apparently capable of miraculous deeds, the fasting girl became the focus of public attention, her parents and family profiting from exhibition of her supposedly magical (masculine) powers (Brumberg, 1988). In this way, she won paternal/social approval, and thus imitative access to a transcendent (male) subjectivity and identity that, in depending upon her ongoing starvation, was bound to collapse. Facing a loss of subjective existence, recognition and love, the fasting girl may prefer to anorexically starve - and even allow her parents to starve her - to death, rather than relinquish the (albeit false) subjective form, identity, and love she held as the 'fasting girl'. For this girl, then, as for the holy and contemporary anorectic, real death, as the price of *subjective* existence, may be preferable to the existential death portended by demonically de-formed, despised *womanhood*. This metaphysical/essence model of *anorexia*, in positing a general, metaphysically based, parentally/socially transmitted (de)construction of the essentially subjective sexual female self as its pathological origin, now permits

---

<sup>64</sup> Her biographer, Raymond of Capua (1853, p. 18), states that the teenage Catherine built and always yearned to retreat to this cell as her place to receive communion from (and unite with) God/Jesus. Here she created the perfect family, her father being Jesus, her mother, the Virgin Mary, and her brothers, the Apostles.

reinterpretation of the *biomedical* view that attributes the disorder to neurological and/or endocrinal dysfunction.<sup>65</sup>

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, *anorexia* and *bulimia* (along with associated disorders such as anxiety, depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorders) have been associated with low levels in the brain of neurotransmitter hormones (such as *serotonin*, *dopamine* and *oxytocin*), an association that has prompted a neurobiological interpretation of eating disorders as resulting from systemic malfunction in the *limbic* or *hypothalamic* regions of the brain. Neuroscientists have also discovered, however, that feelings of love, pleasure, happiness and laughter induce the production of these hormones in the limbic region of the midbrain, with oxytocin specifically produced during the development of the mother/child bond.<sup>66</sup> Because a neurobiological etiology of *anorexia* cannot account for the intrafamilial, social, cultural and historical specificities of *anorexia/bulimia*, it seems plausible to reinterpret the lack of neurotransmitters associated with eating disorders as a biological *consequence* of the paternally imposed disintegration and repressive loss of the essentially spirogenetically unified, integrated, subjective female self, and the associated loss of unconditional, inter-subjective recognition and love. Denied subjective existence, this fragmented, repressed self simply cannot experience the recognition, love and nurturing it needs to survive, and so it is to be expected that the neurotransmitters associated with this experience may also be absent. Further, with the need to repressively restrain and reconstruct that self and its needs, desires and feelings to produce the ideal, paternally approved, social *or* anorexic form, any dopamine/serotonin-induced feelings of pleasure will now come not from *satisfaction* of these needs/desires, but from their almost constant *denial*. And, because the conditional love received through this denial is only a substitute for the deeper, unsatisfiable need for unconditional love, like an addictive drug, it will over time produce fewer neurotransmitters and less pleasure. Thus, the fragmentary loss of essential selfhood accounts not only for neurological dysfunction, but all other forms of hormonal/organic dysfunction that would result from this loss. If this is the case, then any attempts to treat *anorexia/bulimia* with electro-convulsive therapy, (serotonin-raising) antidepressants, or anti-psychotic drugs, for example, may affect the neurological symptoms, but will not be addressing the underlying cause, an argument that may well

---

<sup>65</sup> See page 115 for biomedical interpretations of *anorexia*.

<sup>66</sup> See *Science Daily* (Feb, 2008) at URL: <http://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2008/02/080208172104.htm> and Zuckerman (2005, p. 114).



explain the ineffectiveness of these treatments.<sup>67</sup> This argument may also explain the lack of success of family therapies in treating *anorexia* that is long-term and/or occurring in women, as well as the (reported) success of these therapies in treating short-term *anorexia* in girls.<sup>68</sup> For the therapeutically prescribed *re-enforcement* of parental control (of eating) can be seen as offering the anorexic daughter an escape from womanhood, and thus, from the loss of (love of) the intersubjective self, through a return to her identity as the good child.

It seems, then, that successful treatment (and prevention) of *anorexia* requires the metaphysical, linguistic, and real reinstatement of woman - and thus, of the (m)other - as essentially whole, logically defined, symbolically recognized, sexual subject. For only in this way can we enable the endurance and development of the original bond of intersubjective mother/child recognition and love, a bond that American psychoanalyst Jessica Benjamin (1990) posits as necessary for the successful development of sexually differentiated subjectivity. Benjamin argues that the development of subjectivity depends, not on separation from the mother (a separation that leads to disconnection from other minds and a solipsistic, narcissistic intrapsychism), but on an alternating process of self-assertion and mutual recognition between mother and child that is only possible within an enduring bond of love and “attunement” (p. 31). This bond produces an intersubjectivity that is both autonomous and relational, both intra- and inter-psychic, and also based upon and recognizant of subjective sameness, but also sexual difference. Within this context, the sexual drive can be reconceived as an extension of the original bond of intersubjective love, and as a drive/will to love, rather than the (submissive, sublimated) Nietzschean/Freudian will to objectify, dominate, consume and destroy. As such, it presents to men the opportunity for a *sexual* love based upon the intersubjective recognition of sexual sameness *and* difference, rather than upon ‘hom(m)osexual’ sameness, (paternally) submissive desire, and its fetishistic sublimation and control through the ultimately dissatisfying objectification, possession and annihilation of the (boyish) female. For women, however, the development of an essential, sexual female (inter)subjectivity within the enduring bonds of maternal recognition and love may mean an end to the

---

<sup>67</sup> See Halmi (1992) for evidence of the ineffectiveness of drugs in treating *anorexia/bulimia*.

<sup>68</sup> Lapp & LeCroy (2006, p. 110) argue for a general lack of effectiveness of family and cognitive therapies in treating eating disorders, while Tiemeyer (2009) suggests these therapies only be used for treatment of short-term *anorexia* in adolescent girls.

psychosomatic (dis)orders or re-formations that currently manifest - and survive - the pathogenic fragmentation and loss of this subjective self.

It is the metaphysically-based, Paternally imposed de-formation and loss of the essential female self, and the breaking of these bonds of intersubjective attunement, recognition and love that can therefore account for the development of not only eating (and associated) disorders, but also other forms of disordered consumption that may be seen as produced by, as an attempt to ameliorate, this loss. For even the attainment of the ideal (boyish) form and imitative access to loved, admired (phallic) subjectivity is an always false, limited, uncertain and possibly unsatisfying, addictive substitute for the real thing: essential, unconditionally loved selfhood. And, in denying and reshaping the desires of that disintegrated self, this substitute may well result in forms of excessive, always unsatisfying consumption. It is not surprising then, that, as increasing numbers of girls/women are becoming anorexic/bulimic, the average body size and weight of Western women has steadily increased to the point where around 62% are currently considered to be overweight or obese (NIDDK, 2007).<sup>69</sup> Nor can it be surprising that this increase in the (compulsive) consumption of food has been matched by an increase in the (compulsive) consumption of alcohol, clothing, accessories and all kinds of home-ware.<sup>70</sup> For it is this consumption that fires the pleasure-based dopamine and serotonin so lacking in the fragmented, repressed, isolated self (and reduces the glutamate), temporarily comforting, relieving, and giving fixed external form/identity to the inner emptiness, confusion, and existential stress caused by the loss of (form/recognition/love of) this demonic sexual self. This increase in compulsive consumption may therefore be related to contemporary woman's increasingly obsessive need to clean, renovate, control, and thus perfect her surroundings, both expressing the anxious need to present and maintain the perfect, pretend (lovable) self. In this way, the metaphysical/essence model of *anorexia* has not only offered an account of the various historical and contemporary manifestations, features, and biomedical, psychological, (feminist) cultural and psychoanalytic theories of this (and associated) disorder(s), but also, in refiguring *anorexia* as an inner (pretend) form of subjective survival of the essential self, related this (dis)order to its outer, familial/socially

---

<sup>69</sup> The OECD statistic is 55% for Australian, and 58% for New Zealand women. See:: <http://stats.oecd.org/index.aspx>

<sup>70</sup> This increase in the numbers of compulsive shoppers has led to biomedical recognition of 'compulsive buying disorder' or 'Oniomania'. Studies suggest that 80-90% of oniomanics are women. The disorder is being experimentally treated with anti-depressant drugs that increase the level of *serotonin* in the brain (Hemler, 2007).

constructed (pretend) form and associated forms of compulsive consumption. For, both inner and outer forms are a means of surviving the fragmentary loss of the originary, spirogenetically essential - but metaphysically, familialy, socially and discursively denied and de-formed - sexual female self.

Having explicated and critiqued the various historical and contemporary biomedical, psychological, cultural and psychoanalytic theories and treatments of *anorexia/bulimia*, I have then presented an alternative model that interprets it as postmodern girl/woman's inner, self-adjudicated battle for subjective survival of her essential female self in the face of failure to attain or maintain a boyishly perfect, pretend, paternally approved self/form, and thus imitative access to (phallic) social/transcendent subjectivities and identities. Where *anorexia* has variously and contradictorily been seen as: a disorder of the nervous system (Gull); a gastric disorder caused by intrafamilial conflict (Lasègue); a science/equality based '*neurasthenia*' (Playfair); a disruption of psychosexual development due to repressed libidinal desires (Freud); a repudiation of normal heterosexual womanhood, fear of fatness, and a deficient and externally controlled sense of self (Bruch); an over-conforming embracement of feminine ideals and stereotypes (Boskind-Lodahl); a protesting of confusing and contradictory ideals of femininity (Orbach, Bordo); a cultural and discursive construction (Malson); or a genetic/neurobiological disorder (Insel); all of these interpretations can now be collectively seen as *symptoms* of the underlying metaphysically, socially and discursively fragmented loss of self/form and state of existential distress that *anorexia* relieves. As such, this (dis)order may be seen as the somatic expression, not of the question - 'Am I a man or a woman?' - but rather, of the more vital - 'Do I still exist?'; the nemesis of this anorexic girl/woman now seen to be, not the fat body, but her diabolically de-formed *sexual female* self. If this is the case, then the resolution of *anorexia*, as for all related forms of purifyingly desexualizing, perfectly reforming (under- or over-) consumption, lies in the return of her (spirogenetic) essence to woman, thus enabling her uninterrupted construction as essentially unified, integrated, desiring, speaking subject, and her imaginary and symbolic existence and representation as essential, subjective referent of the term 'woman'. It is in seeking empirical support for this metaphysical/essence model of eating (dis)orders, and thus, for the more fundamental existence of a spirogenetic essence and essential female self that I undertook practical research into the processes of self-development in both eating disordered and non-disordered women, the results of which are presented in Chapter 5.

## **Chapter 5**

### ***Silentstones: Real, Lost and Pretend Selves***

In the first four chapters of this thesis, I have attempted to present theoretical support for the hypothesis that human existence is based upon and partly constructed by an originary, self-subsisting *spirogenetic* essence that operates at individual, sexual and species levels, and in conjunction with familial/social, discursive and psychosomatic forces, to shape and motivate the (whole, integrated) form, function and development of every substantial being. Further, it is the historic and ongoing *lack* of metaphysical and symbolic recognition and representation of a female essence and essential female self that is resulting in the (paternally/socially imposed) de-formation, fragmentation and loss of this essential (sexual) self, and thus, a state of existential (di)stress in girls/women that is relieved via their pursuit and attainment of the (boyishly) perfect self/form. Failing to achieve this paternally/socially imposed ideal feminine self/form, a girl/woman may retreat from this social pursuit to conduct her own *desexualizing* purification, punishment and perfect (childish) re-formation of the fragmented, demonically sexual self in a battle for survival that is currently manifesting as the eating (and associated) disorders *anorexia*, *bulimia* and *orthorexia nervosa*, and *obesity*.<sup>71</sup> It was in order to gather empirical support for this hypothesis that I carried out research using a methodology that - in reflecting the theoretical basis and nature of the hypothesis - recognized and incorporated a mix of *quantitative* and *qualitative* principles and practices in what is known as an *extended case* methodology (Burawoy, 1998).

#### **Methodology**

Traditionally *quantitative* social science research has been based upon the empiricist/positivist principle that, like the physical world (and the language that represents it), the human social order (and its relationships and behaviours) is underpinned and ordered by logical laws, structure and properties that may be revealed and known through the generation of generalizing *theories*, and their reductive, deductive testing via the objective observation, measurement, analysis and interpretation of data (Sarantakos, 1998).

---

<sup>71</sup> In viewing *obesity* as an eating disorder, I am following Bruch's (1974) understanding of *anorexia* and *obesity* as similarly arising from a pathological misuse of the eating function, as well as contemporary theoretical classification of *obesity* as a mental disorder (e.g. Gillet [2009]).

For the empiricist researcher, there is one (observable) reality, and thus, only one true explanation (or theoretical model) of natural/social phenomena, and it is the goal of scientific research to discover that truth, a discovery reliant upon the transcendently disinterested *objectivity* and value-neutrality of the traditionally male observer, and his ability to extract, and then logically analyze and interpret, data from the passive subjects of the research (ibid.; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This quantitative approach has been criticized, however, by followers of the Kantian/Husserlian *phenomenological* (or subjective idealist) view of reality, who argue that the observed or phenomenal world is not identical to or even an exact imprint of the external world of real things-in-themselves, but is subjectively and intentionally constructed and given meaning by and within the conscious mind of the transcendent (male) subject through the interplay of its innate logical concepts/categories and its sensible experience of that reality (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 48). The researcher must therefore always recognize and account for the *subjective*, intentional and concept-laden nature of his/her observations and interpretations, as well as those of the research subjects. In which case, the goal cannot be to produce one objectively conceived, tested and verified (universal) explanation (and prediction) of social phenomena. Rather, the aim is to create the clearest and most comprehensive account and understanding of these phenomena through the *qualitative* exploration and contextualized interpretation of the subjective perspectives, memories, beliefs, values and meanings of both the researcher and those being researched (ibid. p. 53). In addition, *feminist* critics of traditional research methodologies have argued that the supposedly objective, sex- and value-neutral scientific observer has in fact been viewing the object world through the lens of his own singularly privileged (and therefore biased) male subjectivity, perceiving and theorizing women and minority groups as inferior, passive, objectified ‘Others’ in a way that has denied them a subjective position, perception, and voice within the research setting (Denzin, 1994, p. 503). In this way, the researcher/interviewer has utilized his position of power, authority and control to subjectively perceive, influence, and assign his own culturally based meanings and values to the ideas and words of the interviewee. But interpretive, feminist (and) poststructuralist theorists argue that, since we (as bodies) are subjectively constructed and inscribed with the various identities, ideologies, meanings and values of the societies, cultures, and discourses that we inhabit, researchers must be aware of, and strive to understand the various socio-cultural and discursive structures, beliefs, meanings and values that continue to (re)shape and (re)signify their own - and the researchees - lives and perspectives. That is, research participants must be seen as *subjects* and *interpreters* of

their own lives; lives to be qualitatively viewed, explored and interpreted within the *context* of the various familial, social, cultural and discursive relationships, perspectives and values that shape and give meaning to them (Harding, 1986; Haraway, 1991). Thus, the most useful and informative research methods will acknowledge, include and address both similarities *and* differences in social, cultural and linguistic practices and meanings through constant awareness, inquiry, exchange and clarification (Rubin & Rubin, 1995).

The quantitative and qualitative research methodologies outlined above can be seen to reflect the particular conception of essence held by the philosophies underpinning those methodologies. For example, the *quantitative* deduction of hypotheses to be objectively tested and (dis)proved via the observation, quantifying measurement, analysis and interpretation of (sense) data assumes a Lockean view of an essentially self-subsisting, transcendentally objective subject/mind that, through its synthesis of complex ideas from ‘bundles’ of passively observed sense data, can universally know, define and classify the nominally essential properties of real, essentially determined objects/bodies. In contrast, the *qualitative*, interpretive methodology assumes the Kantian/Husserlian view of spatio-temporally unified phenomenal objects/bodies actively and logically constructed and known by and within the conscious mind of the transcendent (male) subject, according to his subjective intentions, perceptions, meanings and values. And the *poststructuralist*, culture-based, interpretive methodology assumes a persistingly formed natural (male) body that is socio-culturally and discursively constructed and inscribed into plural, fluidly mutable, and always contextual subjectivities and identities. But, because (in Section I) I have argued these conceptions of essence to be the purely immaterial or material misconceptions of what may be an originary and wholly *spirogenetic* essence, misconceptions based upon the Platonic/Aristotelian denial of essence to woman, it followed that research into the existence of a female spirogenetic essence and essential self would require a different methodology that, in positing material *and* immaterial, and persistingly whole, identical, but also different, mutable, and thus constructible aspects to essence, utilizes both quantitative *and* qualitative methods. This methodology would aim to gather data for/against the hypothesis, not through the researcher’s detached observation, intuition, and logical definition of immaterial properties, as Aristotle proposed, but through her direct engagement with, and intersubjective exploration of, the participants’ memories, reflections, and contextual interpretations of the stages, processes, and key moments in the development of the female self (-concept). Because it utilizes

intersubjective *dialogue* as the means to generalized, contextualized, thematized, scientific knowledge, this dialogue not just acknowledging, but valuing the mutual interactivity between researcher and researchee, I used the ‘extended case method’, and its entwining of discursive theory and lived experience, to gather data that would not only serve as evidence for/against the theory, but also enable theoretical adjustments “that continue until one’s theory is in sync with the world one studies” (Burawoy, 1998, p. 17). This method therefore enabled a *reflexive* scientific approach that sought an ever more accurate and generalizable - but also falsifiable - explanation of female self-development as it relates to eating disorders.

In positing an originary spirogenetically formed, logically defined female subjectivity that is the condition of its familial/social construction, this extended case method therefore required formulation of an *hypothesis* that would stabilize and loosely guide a mutual exploration of the development of female selfhood, by assisting the (inter)subjective recollection, expression, exploration and interpretation of the essentially and socio-culturally constructed experiences, thoughts, feelings, meanings and values of both the researchee and researcher. But, as Irigaray (1985a, 2008) has long argued (and as I have argued in Section I), women have historically been denied real, imaginary, and Symbolic existence and recognition as fully embodied, sexual female subjects. It was therefore a requirement of the interview process, and also key to exploration of the question - Is there a (spirogenetic) female essence and an essentially subjective female self? - that I structure and explore the interview questions in ways that attempted to recognize and enable the expression of both interviewer and participant as not only socially/discursively constructed and identified, but also autonomously whole, self-aware, and thus epistemically privileged *female* subjects and creators of their own (self-)percepts, concepts, memories, meanings and values. For only by attempting to think, remember, imagine, speak and relate as (self-) consciously whole, integrated subjects might the layers of sexually objectifying, self-silencing, self-annihilating sociocultural (de)construction be identified and peeled back to possibly reveal an essential self beneath. In addition, such an intersubjective exploration required that, at some (later) stage in the interview process, I share with the interviewee some aspect or other of my hypothesis so that she might consider its relevance (or not) to her experiences, concepts, and reflexive understandings of the stages, processes and key events in the development of her own (sense/concept of) self. In this way, the extended case method sought a collective, ultimately objective knowledge of the participants’

subjectively perceived, experienced and remembered self/world that, far from representing the “view from nowhere” of the transcendent (male) subject and creator of reality, strove for an inclusive “view from everywhere” (Bordo, 1993, p. 40) created through the (inter)subjective expression and collective analysis, understanding and interpretation of the experiences, perspectives, and self-concepts of all participants. Or, in other words, an objective view and knowledge of (inner) reality gained through clearly perceiving, understanding, and relating the self-experienced, self-expressed nature and development of whole, integrated, autonomously and relationally defined ‘persons-in-themselves’.

While the research quantitatively sought to gather, analyse, collate and present interview data as evidence for or against the hypothesis, its qualitative recognition of the subjective, theory- and concept-laden nature of our perceptions and memories of events meant that it was not specific, *episodic* memories (or their veracity) that were the focus of the research, but rather, the ways in which remembered events (real or imagined) had shaped, and been shaped by, the participant’s sense/concept of self. That is, the research focused on *autobiographical* memories. Because these memories have been recognized as accurate and enduring, and because, as conscious subjects, the participants had epistemic privilege to their own perceptions, experiences, and memories of events, and the ways in which those events (re)shaped their sense/concept of self, they therefore presented as reliable witnesses to the nature of and changes in that self. It is this witness reliability that underwrites the validity of the research data to stand as evidence for/against the hypothesis. This premise of memory reliability draws upon recent studies (e.g. Conway, 2005; Pillemer, 2001) that recognize two separate types of memory systems: *episodic* (about real events) and *autobiographical* (memories of events that have shaped the sense/concept of self). Because they shape who we were/are/become, and because they are personal and therefore context-, emotion-, and concept-laden, autobiographical memories have been shown to be very accurate and also to be better remembered, especially those events that have deeply affected our sense/concept of self. As Pillemer says, “memories associated with life transitions are especially vivid and long lasting” (ibid. p. 125), this semanticizing of episodic memories making them more resilient to forgetting. Hence, because our memories not only shape, but are shaped by, our sense/concept of self, autobiographical memories (or the lack of) - in their endurance and plasticity - can provide valuable insight into the developmental stages, and processes, and the state of, and changes in, that self. The research therefore gave priority to the enduring effects/affects, the layers of meaning,



as well as the specific content of autobiographical memories, which present as evidence for the various ways in which the persisting self has perceived, (re)constructed, and been (re)constructed by, her own life experiences. On this basis, and in line with Gillett's (2009, p. 265) view that a child's sense of self affects the content of her memories, it may be the very incongruities and inconsistencies in memory that offer the keenest insights into, and new understandings of, the nature of and changes in the subjective self, especially when those memories and percepts/concepts of self are collectively correlated with - and thematically analysed in relation to - those of all the research participants.

The subsequent thematic coding, analysis, collation, and contextualized interpretation of the interview data, and the final discussion of this interpretation with participants therefore enacted a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods designed to reveal support (or not) for the existence of a spirogenetically and socially constructed subjective female self, and, conditional upon this support, for the possibility of a real essence-based, logically (and thus universally) defined, but also socially/culturally situated *knowledge* of human existence. For, if the evidence were to support the existence of a spirogenetic essence and essentially subjective female self, then that which Kant and (the *Tractarian*) Wittgenstein saw as an impossible task - to know the real, unified thing in itself - would become possible if and when we recognize and accurately represent the *essential form* and *function*, not of an immaterial soul/mind or its phenomenal objects, but of the spirogenetically unified, subjective 'person-in-him/herself'.

### **Interviews**

The research process entailed a series of in-depth interviews with five women who had previously experienced eating disorders, and five who had not, in which both interviewer and interviewee equally and openly engaged in mutually respectful *in-depth discussion* and *critical exploration* of the (personal and social) recollections, meanings, assumptions, and current perceptions of the significant events and stages in the development of their own subjectivity and sexual identity. With a keen awareness of the sometimes highly sensitive and emotionally charged nature of the topic, I (as the interviewer) endeavoured to loosely guide the discussions in a sensitive, empathetic, non-prejudiced, and reflexively and culturally interpretive manner that reflected my own past experience of, and thus sensitivity to, the issues of female self-development and *anorexia*. To reiterate, the aim of

this interview process was to explore the hypothesis of a self-subsisting ‘spirogenetic’ essence operating at individual, sexual, and species levels to (co-)construct every human being as a sexed subjective self. It is the metaphysical and symbolic denial of the *female* essence and essential sexual female self that, through familial/social (de)construction and pejorative inscription, is causing a generalized pathological fragmentation and loss of that self (-concept), thereby creating a state of existential (di)stress that, under certain further conditions, may result in eating (and associated) disorders, as forms of survival. Data taken as evidence in support of this hypothesis included:

- i) the interviewee’s experience, description or interpretation of her childhood, adolescent and adult self-development as a process of diminution or loss of a pre-existing or originary *self*, along with attributes and capacities associated with that self (e.g. wholeness, autonomy, intuition, wonder, self-knowledge, connectedness, empathy, an integration of needs, interests, perceptions, feelings and actions);
- ii) any marked changes in the interviewee’s experience, view or concept of self and others during pubertal/sexual development (e.g. a re-perception, reconception, and pejorative devaluing of her self, i.e. seen not through her own, but through the eyes of others);
- iii) any marked features or changes in verbal or non-verbal expression that might indicate a recalled or immediate change in the interviewee’s perspective, concept or experience of her self (e.g. the substituting of ‘you’ for ‘I’, or changes in intonation);
- iv) any sense or experience of this loss of original/real selfhood involving a splitting or fragmentation of the self (e.g. a mind/head-body split; a self/other disconnection; a fragmenting of self- or body-image into separate parts), followed by the felt need to reconstruct that self as a perfect self, form or identity;
- v) any occasions when the interviewee felt a reconnection of mind/head and body; times when the self felt whole again and/or reconnected to others;
- vi) any experience of the reconstructed/gendered self being shattered or threatening to shatter due to a real or perceived inability or failure to attain or maintain familial/social ideals and expectations;

- vii) any subsequent feelings of rejection, alienation, hopelessness, and thus, the need to escape or withdraw from the external, social world, accompanied by a need to punish, purify, desexualize and control the sexual female self (and body), or what may be seen as the 'real me';
- viii) any understanding of this withdrawal and need for (visible) self-control, punishment etc. as a *battle* for (desexualized, childish) purity and perfection (of form), and thus, the subjective recognition, love and approval of the inner self that may be experienced (or later interpreted) as a hopeful means of its *survival*;
- ix) any post-interview experience of a sense of reconnection of (or with) the original self and others (e.g. a feeling of finding one's solid ground; of being back in one's body again; of coming to know one's own thoughts, feelings, and desires; of being able to speak one's truth without fear, censoring, or self-consciousness; of being able to look out and see the world again, rather than looking within).

The interviewees were all New Zealand residents, ranging in age from seventeen to seventy-nine. The group was composed of, initially twelve, but ultimately ten women who were either previously unknown to me (6), recent friends (3), or academic/social acquaintances (3) that were invited to participate or heard of the research and expressed interest in participating. Even though they were informed (either in conversation or introductory letter) that the research would involve an exploration of the development of female selfhood and eating disorders, none of the twelve participants was given any detail of the specific nature or focus of the research until some time into their own interview process (if ever). Hence, *none had any prior inkling of the research premise*. Following delivery of the letter of introduction, and the gaining of informed consent, two or three conversational interviews were conducted with each participant at intervals ranging from a week to two months, depending on her availability. Two of the twelve participants withdrew from the interview process (one before it began; one for personal reasons), and in two other cases (where the interviewees [Miss P, Fleur] were concerned over recent nightmares or possible violence) it was necessary to obtain guidance from the research advisor and counsellor, Wol Hansen. In each case the difficulties were overcome, and both participants completed the interview process. The interviews were digitally recorded, transcribed (using a verbatim method and a 'Key' to emphasise the form as well as the

content of speech), and then returned for checking and any deletions that the interviewees may have wished to make in light of post-interview thoughts or concerns. The transcribed information was then analysed and re-presented as a culturally described - but also topically and theoretically interpreted - report. My method of data analysis was based on a “*grounded theory approach*” which employed a “*constant comparative method*” (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998, p. 137) which required that the collected data be coded, analysed and collated according to specific themes, and in order to discover and develop concepts which did or did not support the hypothesis. The data collected from the ten participants were therefore firstly analysed to identify and group remembered experiences, events and related changes in self (-perception) according to their occurrence in either childhood, adolescent and/or adult stages of self-development. The data was then thematically coded, analysed and collated according to the five main themes informing the interview questions (i.e. the personal, familial/social, sexual, maternal, and anorexic/bulimic self). I then compared and contrasted the two analyses, in order to identify and examine major similarities and differences between the two groups in terms of their percepts/concepts of and relationship to their (sexual) female selves and significant others. The final method of analysis involved a closer examination and interpretation of data relating to the ‘pre-sexual’ and the ‘sexual’ development of the female self (and self-concept) to see if there is empirical support for the existence of an originary spirogenetic essence and essential female self, the loss of which may be resulting in the development of eating (and associated) disorders.

## **Results**

In presenting the results of this research, I wish firstly to pay tribute to the participants who saw the process through to completion, and were prepared to answer and discuss what were sometimes very sensitive, difficult and probing questions regarding their personal lives and experiences. Because many had not previously spoken about, or may have been unwilling or unable to explore certain issues (especially those concerning the sexual, abused, or disordered self), and because the theory presented here is a new and unexplored theory (of essences, sexual self-development, and eating disorders), it was necessary to pose these questions and suggest new ways of approaching these issues in order to give participants the opportunity to consider, and either confirm or deny, the relevance of the theory to their own life experiences. Therefore, at some later stage in the interview process, I wove relevant aspects of the hypothesis into the discussion, asking the participant to

consider them in relation to her own lived experiences, perspectives and reflections. Hence, in the following results, questions or suggestions that may appear to ‘lead’ the participant are simply presenting this new (spirogenetic) approach to female self-development and eating disorders so as to gain a considered, intersubjective response from the interviewee. And because they were being asked to consider a new approach to difficult issues, the interviewees’ sometimes seemingly tentative agreement with this approach has, if supported by the larger picture presented in the transcript, been taken as evidence in support of the theory. One final factor taken into account in considering and re-presenting data as evidence for or against the hypothesis was the information that is lost in translation of the spoken word (and the gestures, moods, and intuitive/empathetic understandings accompanying it) to the written and read transcript.<sup>72</sup> In analysing, collating and interpreting the data, I have made every effort to account for and remain true to the verbally and non-verbally expressed thoughts, feelings, moods, and signals of the interviewees, and the spirit in which they were conveyed. To gauge the accuracy of this analysis and interpretation, four of the interviewees were invited to read this chapter, and all were in agreement with the way their recollection, ideas and interpretations had been presented.

Although I understood the final group of interviewees to include five eating disordered and five non-eating disordered women, it came to light during the interview process that one of those classified as non-eating disordered (Gina) had experienced a 2-3 year bout of *bulimia*, while her daughter Lewie had experienced bouts of disordered eating described by her mother, but not herself, as *anorexia*. I therefore placed Gina but not Lewie in the eating disordered group. Of the six interviewees with experience of eating disorders, one had experienced *orthorexia*<sup>73</sup> (*Gorgie*, from 17 through her 20’s), three, *anorexia* (*Kerry*, *Miss P* and *Sunshine* - from late teens through 20’s) and two, *bulimia* (*Gina* [mid 20’s], and *Cilla* [mid 40’s]). There were two mother-daughter pairs in the research (*Gorgie-Sunshine* and *Gina-Lewie*), and all four had experienced either an eating disorder or disordered eating.

---

<sup>72</sup> This understanding of the orality that may be lost in translation of the spoken to the written word is gleaned from an unpublished essay by Vanessa Lewis (2010), as drawn from Kate Moore in Anna Green’s *Unpacking the Stories* (2004, p. 170).

<sup>73</sup> *Orthorexia* was first defined and diagnosed in 1997 by Steven Bratman M.D. as the fanatical and unhealthy obsession with the preparation and eating of healthy foods, an obsession that socially isolates the individual, and in which food is eaten not for pleasure, but for virtue.

## *The Personal Self*

When asked about their experiences and self-perceptions during early childhood, eight of the ten participants remembered themselves as happy, confident, active, creative, self-motivated, and self-expressive; as feeling that they could play and explore freely; as seeing, experiencing and conceptualizing their self through their own eyes, and as whole and integrated; as feeling that they knew and were free to be the ‘real me’; as being seen and unconditionally loved by others for who they were (i.e. no expectations); as developing close and enduring friendships with other children; as connected to and loving nature/animals; and as being either non-gendered or aware of themselves as being female without that marking or implying any difference from their brothers or other boys in terms of ability, worth, recognition or self-expression. For example, *Gorgie* (55), who grew up playing sport and exploring with her five brothers, said of her childhood self:

Once I was so confident in myself....that I would just run in and just say ‘this is me’....and you could see people once upon a time responded to that ...[my brothers] knew I was a girl, but it was like it didn’t ^matter...when I was at a co-ed like Intermediate, boys admired me for my athletic prowess, and so did the girls, so I was seen for what I was, that’s what gave me the feeling that I was a strong girl....there was nothing that indicated to me that I didn’t have as bright a future as them.<sup>74</sup>

And of her father’s view of her child self, Gorgie says, “when I was young I was always his princess, and he’d call me ‘Gorgie’...he loved me for who I was”. Similarly, Gorgie’s daughter *Sunshine* (33), who had two younger brothers and also a very sports-focused childhood, said of her child self, “when I was younger, I was always a real confident kid...at first I didn’t care how anyone perceived me, I was me...I was real...yeah...I knew what I wanted”. And *Lewie* (17) echoed Sunshine when she said of her child self,

as a child, you are just yourself....you just do whatever the hell you want to do, you don’t have expectations put upon you, and you’re just the child, you’re a person  
*Would you say you’re loved for who you are?*  
Yeah, for who you are, yeah...you’re your whole self....there’s a sense of love, between your mother and you that is so close and so strong  
*Your whole self, would you call that the real me?*  
Yeah....the child...that’s why children are so beautiful, ‘cause they’re just, they’re the original person.

---

<sup>74</sup> Key to transcript excerpts: underlining indicates emphasis; ^ indicates rise in pitch; \*...\* indicates speech quiet and/or dispirited; ~...~ indicates strong, spirited tone; \*\*...\*\* indicates rapid, fearful speech; ' indicates pause less than ½ sec; '...' indicates pause more than ½ sec; ---...--- means interruption; '....' means discontinuous text



Figure 3: *Original Whole Unfettered Self* (by Lewie, 15)

In the same vein, *Fleur* (41), raised as one of eight children on a Waikato dairy farm, perceived the child that she was at 4-5 years of age as the ‘real me’, a girl who loved, and was encouraged and excelled at primary school, and who therefore had no reason to see herself as different from or inferior to boys. This perception of childhood as a time of expression of a real, unrestrained self was also echoed by *Jean* (59) and *Gwenda* (79) who, as ‘tomboys’, were given the freedom by their parents to pursue what were traditionally *masculine* interests (e.g. making guns, fishing, playing on farm machinery), but which both saw as just part of who they were and what they did as girls. In Jean’s early childhood, there was no particular awareness of sex or gender, and just the freedom “to make things and to create things, I was allowed to be the real me I think...I was allowed to be my natural self, now that natural self happened to be quite tomboyish”, whilst *Gwenda* similarly reflected,

as long as I can remember, I always had a hammer ‘n nail in my hand... I’d get an apple-box and put the wheels on it, and a handle, and they had a ^pram, for their dolls ‘n things, and I wasn’t interested in dolls....I didn’t play [my sisters’] games

*So you were what you’d call a bit of a tomboy?*

That’s right, yeah...I was really the boy

*the fact that you were a girl, and the boys were boys, and that you had different bodies was*

...never made an issue of?

Didn't make a difference, never made a difference, no.<sup>75</sup>

Whilst *Cilla* (67) too “liked all the boys’ things”, and played the sports the boys played, she also loved her dolls, and loved to learn, and so was allowed to pursue a broad, non-gendered range of interests in what was initially a happy childhood in which she felt seen, known, loved and accepted for who she was by her parents and siblings. Similarly, as one of six children raised in an English mining village, *Gina* (54) recalled an initial freedom to play in and explore her surroundings without the constraints placed on children today, though the conscious self that *Gina* recalled was not a whole, embodied self:

as a child, I mean there are, huge gaps of memory in my, I remember tiny little, snippets of it, I don't remember significant portions of my childhood.... of the tiny amounts of memory that I do have, I just have of seeing myself looking out...without judgement...I just remember being, and observing...the best way I can describe that is just, is being an observer looking down, that's the \*only memory I have.\*

As becomes clear in her later comments (see p. 170), *Gina* interprets her perception and experience of her child self as ‘an observer looking down’ as being related to parentally imposed constraints, punishments, and thus, a sense of guilt and shame associated with the sexual female parts of her body.

The other two participants, *Kerry* (38) and *Miss Perfect* (55), had little or no memory of even *having* a childhood, let alone one characterized by such features as self-knowledge, self-expression, wonderment, creativity and unconditional love, features that the other interviewees had associated with their real, original or core self. Instead, these women recalled only the fear, shame, secrecy and alienation of growing up around paternal alcoholism, parental conflict and violence-based control, and thus, for *Kerry*, a feeling of “always walking on eggshells” - always self-monitoring in order to avoid paternal disapproval and abuse:

I think probably as a young child....when that's the only reality you know, you accept that as being reality, right, so that was my reality, I didn't know any other way of being other than being extremely controlled and extremely...extremely kinda under the thumb.

For *Miss P*, the knowledge and unconditional love of the original female self that she was

---

<sup>75</sup> Transcript beginning in lower case indicates omission of preceding words.



to one day feel for her newborn daughter was absent from her own childhood. Traumatized by parental conflict, her father's alcohol-driven violence, and her mother's lack of affection, Miss P recalled only ever striving for their recognition, love and approval:

I can't ever remember knowing myself...I can't ever remember knowing myself or loving myself, ever...I never saw Mum 'n Dad kiss or cuddle in my life...Dad was sick most of his life apparently after his mother committed suicide...most nights when he came home he'd been drinking anyway, there was more violence that went on in the house than anything...he'd bash Mum up, he'd tip preserves down the toilet, smash up the china...we used to go 'n hide behind the couch down in the basement at night, to get away from it.

Far from a carefree and unrestrained childhood, both Kerry and Miss P felt from a young age the weight of parental - and particularly maternal - expectation to create and present to the social world a perfect, successful and happy façade that would mask the underlying family dysfunction. Thus, from the age of six/seven, Miss P was expected to take on the wifely duties of cooking and cleaning, whilst also excelling in the public arena by rigorously pursuing and achieving excellence in schoolwork, ballet and dramatic productions. As she recalled, "I was dux of the school when I left, and I did all the school shows, I did all the production stuff... I put my life into excelling". For, to be perfect in the eyes of the world was to please - and thus gain a modicum of recognition, love and approval from - her parents.

### **The Familial/Socially (De)constructed Sexual Female Self**

Whether it began at an early age, as for Miss P, Kerry, and Gina, or with the onset of adolescence and pubertal development, all participants spoke of, and were more or less affected by, the experience of coming to see themselves no longer through their own (non-judgemental) eyes, but through the critical, sexually objectifying and fragmenting eyes of others - particularly their parents, and more specifically, the father. Rather than seeing, knowing and loving themselves (and being seen, known and loved) for who they were - that is, as the 'real me' - almost every participant learnt to re-perceive and re-conceive her real self as imperfect, inferior, sinful, shameful, and 'bad' because of her female body, or more specifically, its 'dirty', 'disgusting' sexual, female parts. Parental recognition, love and approval was no longer unconditional, but depended upon the sloughing off and erasure of the real sexual female self in pursuit of the perfect form that, in meeting paternal and social *ideals* of femininity, would enduringly redefine and identify her as a 'good' girl.

What followed, then, was a splitting, fragmentation and loss of the ‘real’ or ‘core’ self (and self-concept), as that originally unified, integrated and related female self became dis-integrated, disconnected from others, and literally and conceptually divested of the offending sexual female parts. Through this fragmentation, the conscious self or ‘I’ came to see and experience itself as either separate from and above the sexual body/parts, or as a head/mind detached from its sexual female body, the ‘dirty’ and/or inadequate parts being pared or “pruned” off both the real and conceptual self/mind and body, as they were anxiously reshaped to fit the ideal feminine form and functions.

*Jean*, for example, remembered her originally whole, connected natural or “core self” as beginning to ‘close down’ at around eight years-of-age, due to the alienating effects of parental alcoholism. But it was pubertal development and the onset of periods that brought a sense of shame, fear and anxiety about her female body, and thus a secreting, ‘pruning off’, and silencing of the sexual female parts of that core self:

Well I got my period when I was 13, and that was a pretty scary number...it was a bit like surgery...Yeah, it’s a secret...and I don’t remember Mum’s stuff ever being around, so you copied, because it was somehow secret in the household, it had to be a secret from Dad...I did develop round shoulders so it was probably from wanting to...feeling just a bit embarrassed about who I was and not wanting to stand up tall

*could you say, then, that what you felt self-conscious about was actually the sexual parts of you?*

Yeah...yeah...anything to do with sex was intrinsically dirty

*this closing down or this withdrawal that occurred, would you say then, that felt like a closing down of your core self?*

I’d say it was more like a pruning...instead of it, [being] able to just keep on growing and therefore flowering in that sense, and doing a natural cycle, I’d say it was all kind of trimmed, I took the pruning shears to myself.... oh, definitely a control.

Whilst the dirty, shameful sexual aspects of Jean’s core self were sloughed off, others were added, when, concerned by a lack of breast development, Jean’s mother bought her a padded bra; her relief at acquiring a pleasing (if false) feminine shape outweighed only by the constant fear of exposure and embarrassment: “to have admitted that you had a padded bra would’ve been the most, the worst thing that I could ever imagine, I would’ve almost died before I did that”. Similarly, *Fleur* recalled a marked change in perception and experience of her self occurring at around eleven/twelve years-of-age as, set against a background of paternal violence, she left the security of long-term friendships and individual achievement at Primary school to face isolation, degradation, and a consequent

failure to achieve at Intermediate. This failure created a sense of self-worthlessness that was only exacerbated (in High School) by the secrecy, shame, humiliation, and further loss of trust that accompanied sexual development. As Fleur put it,

I sort of felt worthless I think, at school, because....I didn't feel I was given the opportunities I should've been, so I sort of felt, yeah I did, I felt worthless

*A gradual process of losing your sense of self-worth, and your confidence in your self?*

Yes, yes, I did, that's exactly how I felt....I just fell off the track, I....derailed myself really

*So at some time you feel you lost yourself?*

Yeah, for a lot of years....I'd say from, Intermediate...on.... I think I just became lost in myself, I didn't know who I was, I didn't want to know who I was, really....you sort of get a co...I got a complex....I think with the way my father was, I just sort of, I lost...trust maybe, back then

*Was [puberty] a difficult time?*

Well, yeah it was, Mum never explained anything to me, and I was sitting in class and I got this terrible stomach-ache and I thought \*'Oh my God'\*, and I'd got my first period, 'n mum never...she never told me....it was horrible... so that was quite humiliating

*you became aware of yourself as a girl, and having this secret, developed a different image of yourself?*

Yeah, you do, and it's a negative one.

Rebelling against the paternal and pedagogical authority that had degraded, betrayed, and abused her real female self, Fleur was expelled from school at fifteen, and, alienated from that self and family, set off for Sydney to build a new, good, successful, socially acceptable identity.

Though beginning at a much earlier age, *Gina* also developed a negative awareness and concept of her sexual female self as a "bad person", as the imposition of parental constraints and punishments taught her that anything to do with the sexual (or sexualized) body was naughty, dirty, and shameful. Thus, at around three years of age, during a family camping trip, Gina was severely chided by her mother for 'peeing' on the grass, and on another occasion, for touching her "genital area". This awareness greatly intensified, however, with the onset of pubertal development, and the realization that Gina and her sisters were "sexual prisoners" in their father's home, either forbidden boyfriends, or made to feel smutty and dirty for having one:

I was not allowed a boyfriend, before I had my periods 'cause I wasn't old enough, and after my period, I was never allowed a boyfriend because I could get pregnant, and so, in reality I was never allowed a boyfriend....so we were kept virtual, sexual, prisoners....Then I met a boyfriend, who I brought back to my Mum....when he went, my mother was furious I'd sat on the edge of the settee, near him because I could show him my legs....and so we were made to feel smutty, because we had an interest in boys.... my mother made me feel dirty, or I allowed my mother to feel me, make me feel dirty, because of her behaviour.

Gina's *sexual* female self therefore became a source of intense shame, guilt and embarrassment that she escaped by transcendently separating her conscious self/intellect from sexual body; that is, by becoming the detached, desensitized "observer looking down":

I don't remember being happy and I don't remember being sad, I don't remember anything, It's just sort of a...just an observation....I don't attach any feeling to it.

Subsequent interview questions around Gina's feelings and self-perceptions following sexual activity with her boyfriend indicated this detached transcendence to be motivated by still powerful feelings of shame and guilt associated with inhabiting what Gina had learnt to see as her bad, disapproved, sexual female self/body:

*how did you then feel after you knew you had had sex, and then had to...face your family, it would've caused a great amount of perhaps shame or...?*

I don't know I think, I mean I've, I've gone back to looking down again (laughter)...so I don't know, I actually, it's like it's not me that lived, you know

*Yep, so it's got to be a sexual thing eh, the looking down?*

Yeah, it does, yeah.

Despite Gina's best efforts to break the cycle, her daughter *Lewie* experienced the same pubertal fragmentation and loss of a previously whole self, accompanied by a feeling of loss of the unconditional love of her parents and alienation from her siblings, as she learnt to perceive and fragmentarily reconceive her female self through the sexually objectifying and judgemental eyes of others. Whether those others were the schoolgirls who sniggered about her premature breast buds (and later, her large breasts), or the Mormon leaders who demanded that girls cover their shamefully seductive sexual bodies, or even boyfriends and male friends who continue to pejoratively sexualize teenage girls as either 'sluts' or 'cock-teasers', Lewie learnt from them to dislike, feel uncomfortable with, and thus divide and hide, her sexual female self/body:

the Mormon church was quite...you've got to cover this up kind of thing. Your body, as a female, was something to be covered up so that males didn't, you know, check you out.... And it even happens not even within a religion, just within society really....I mean, just being a teenage girl, girls are always the sluts, the whores...

...I'm not very comfortable with my own body at all....I guess I've always felt like that.... like I can't remember, when it started, I mean it's more or less the whole body image sort of thing, where I'm just not comfortable with my body 'cause I've got a blemish there, or a hair or wherever....I've never liked my boobs which is funny 'cause I developed them at a very early age....I don't like looking in the mirror to be honest....I guess I mainly see my face, I look at my face, more so than I do my body. My face is more important to me than my body ...\*in the sense of...yeah, what I look like....I hate my legs, I've always hated my legs.\*

During the discussion, I asked Lewie if the fragmentary shift that she had experienced at puberty could be described as a shift from a state of being, and being seen and unconditionally loved for who you *are*, to a state in which whether you are seen, loved, and even *exist* depends on how you *look* and what you *do*. In agreeing with this description, Lewie revealed that this disintegrative process, as she had experienced it, had been the topic of her school artwork in the year(s) prior to the interview. Apart from offering unexpected support for my hypothesis, Lewie's artwork managed to show in just a few pictures what I had so far taken two hundred pages to write, and for this reason, she has allowed me to include several pieces in this thesis; pieces such as the one below that so clearly depicts the dismayed sense of fragmentation and loss of self accompanying pubertal development and the sexualizing objectification of what was once, for Lewie, her essentially whole, subjective female self.



Figure 4: *'Dolls Don't Cry'* (by Lewie)<sup>76</sup>

---

<sup>76</sup> In depicting the (mal)development of her own essential female self, Lewie's art (created at 15-17 years-of-age) also mirrors various stages and processes of development as described by the other participants and myself as interviewer. With Lewie's consent, I have added captions to her artwork.

Lewie's artwork also reflects *Gorgie's* experience of her real self and the dramatic shift in the way her father and five brothers (and therefore she herself) came to perceive and treat her as a girl with a sexually developing body. This shift began at nine years-of-age when, following her mother's death, Gorgie's oldest brother began to sexually abuse her, this abuse continuing for six years. Along with the secrecy, guilt and shame associated with this violation came the realization that to be a girl now meant being seen as different from, weaker than, and inferior to the boys, and thus excluded from their games, while her father made Gorgie self-consciously aware of (deficiencies in) her appearance, and the need to present herself and act in a femininely restrained, but sexually attractive, way. Adolescence therefore brought the frightening realization that there were now *conditions* to being - and being recognized and loved as - a (good) girl, conditions that Gorgie was ultimately unable to meet:

I no longer could run into a room and say "this is me"... it was like I would walk into a room and think, well, this is me, but do you really want to know me because I think you've already decided who I ^am....so you just don't say anything, in fact, you want to not be seen.... I didn't feel as proud of my body outside of the sports field, as I did on it...you know, somehow I had lost that...whereas, at one stage, before that, at Intermediate, I carried it from the sports-field into the classroom...you know "this is me"...I never separated the two *Yeah, and what was it, do you think, that made you not feel proud or confident of your body?* Because the body all of a sudden became sexual

*what were the things that were happening in your life, say in your family, and with your brothers say, that made you start to see your self as sexual?*

Well, they began pointing out parts of my body, and then my father would be saying 'hey....brush your hair more', 'n 'clean your teeth' and 'look how you're dressing....I became aware that my father was looking at me differently, it was like my physical appearance was suddenly important....So you couldn't do the things that you really wanted to do...you were....having to play this role where your body has become sexual, and that it's there for the boys to admire...and I didn't feel good about that at ^all, and yet in a way...you wanted to be admired, but you couldn't...you didn't feel good about that part of yourself and who you are, and your body...but once you did...and you'd.... you'd wish you were in another body<sup>77</sup>

Well I just separated myself from the girls, and the boys...I became an island...and the only time I showed myself was when I was playing sport...I withdrew....I'd participate, I'd be there, but I was not there. Nobody could see who I really was

*But you were aware of who you really were ^inside?*

No, no, I'd lost...over time you completely lose yourself...you know that you're holding back...and you start putting up fronts.

---

<sup>77</sup> I have used red text here to highlight the clear shift from Gorgie's use of the first-person 'I' to the second-person 'you' in describing the pubertal shift in which her unconditional existence and sense of self suddenly became conditional upon satisfying paternal/fraternal ideals of (objectifying) feminine appearance and achievement.

This sexually objectifying fragmentation, withdrawal and ultimate loss of the real female self was of course compounded for Gorgie by the secrecy, shame, fear and confusion imposed by ongoing incestuous abuse. Gorgie describes the abusive 'taking' of self as follows:

Does someone take 'n take, take off you 'n it becomes a secret? That someone takes your sexual self, and, and creates it, makes it into a secret, that can devastate the person you love the most, your father.... 'don't tell your father that I'm actually taking, your female body, I'm touching the parts that make you different from me, and I'm getting turned on by it' .... I see, like a hunger... a hunger that can't be fulfilled... and I don't understand 'cause I don't feel a hunger, I only feel a fear, a secret, a hurt... a numbness that's developing, a fear, I'm frightened... I'm frightened because this doesn't feel right, this feels so wrong.

It is this fearful secreting, withdrawal, and fragmenting of (sexual female) self that Gorgie later passed on to her daughter Sunshine, at the time of *her* pubertal development and sexual activity with boyfriends. As Gorgie recalled it:

I remember Sunshine even being in the lounge.... with a boy, and I walked in once, and you could see they must've been touching each other under the blanket, and I closed the door 'n thought \*\*'I don't want to know this!'... it was awful, I didn't want to know... isn't that irresponsible?... but I didn't want to know \*\*.... I'd say to her 'are you 'n D being sexual?', 'n she'd say 'no', and I'd say 'well that's alright then', and there they are sleeping in the same bed!... you know, 'that's alright then'.... because that's as far as I wanted to go.

For *Sunshine*, this shift in perception and the pejorative, fragmentary reconception of her real female self began with the realization (at ten) that her father's recognition, love and approval were no longer unconditional, but from now on to be earned through sporting excellence (in the volleyball team that he coached), a (fear-driven) *failure* to perform incurring her father's wrath and her humiliation and embarrassment in front of teammates. Sunshine's real female self now inadequate in her father's eyes, the subsequent pubertal development of that self brought a further measure of imperfection, shame and secrecy that initiated a paternally/socially imposed, fashion-fuelled reduction of her previously whole self and (sexual) body to a collection of more or less imperfect parts:

we were all pushed down, especially when we wanted to talk about sex, you couldn't talk to Mum about sex, Dad, you could never talk to him about that sort of stuff anyway... it came to feel dirty, because it was a secret. It was obviously something you didn't talk about, it was made to feel wrong

*you don't look at yourself as a whole then?*

No!... I don't think I've done that for years... years and years and years. But I think you're

actually taught to look at yourself like that...it's like you look in the magazines: how to get those hips, how to get those arms in shape....and they have one page for this, 'n...it's always in bits....[O]ther people look at you and....they dissect you...so they go 'oh, I love your legs', and you go 'ok, so you don't like the rest of me'.

A failure in her father's eyes, and her real sexual self reduced to shamed silence, Sunshine became alienated from her self, her parents and friends, and, in turning to boys for love, affection and a sense of security, ultimately experienced the terror of extreme sexual violation. The result of this process was a separation of mind/head from a violated, degraded, fragmented sexual body that left Sunshine unable to see her face, or acknowledge the person within:

Have you ever read the book *The Handmaid's Tale*?....when they have sex, they pull up a sheet, between the bottom and the top, so you don't see the face, so it doesn't become personal...so the body's seen as completely sp....it's all detached, like the body's split ...and it's purely just to reproduce.<sup>78</sup>

A similarly fragmentary shift in perception, and disconnection from her real female self and also her family began, for *Cilla*, at three years-of-age, when she was sexually abused by "Joe Pig" (who worked for her father as a railway ganger), and then, under threat of death, reduced to a state of enduring fear, secrecy and shame. The sense of alienation from family grew even stronger when a trike/car accident put Cilla in hospital for thirteen months, far from infrequently seen family, and later when, approaching puberty, Cilla was sent off for holidays to her favourite aunt's, where she was once again sexually abused, this time by her uncle. Possibly more traumatic, however, was the fact that, having told her mother of the abuse, Cilla was still dispatched each holiday to her aunt's place:

He was the main abuser in my life, and he was eleven years older than my aunty who was ten years older than Mum, so that, he'd abused my mother....he was a filthy old man.... So I told my mother, 'cause the older I got, I told my mother and she said 'oh look, he used to do that to me too, but', she said, 'it would kill aunty if I told her' ....and back I was sent for ^more abuse.

---

<sup>78</sup>*The Handmaid's Tale* is a futuristic novel by Margaret Atwood (1987). In the totalitarian, theocratic republic of *Gilead*, women have been stripped of their rights, and reduced to subjugated sexual objects of male ownership and control. As handmaids, young women are seen as headless bodies, non-persons enslaved to and used by infertile couples to reproduce. In the 'Ceremony', the wife restrains the handmaid while the husband penetrates her.



The effect of this abuse and her mother's betrayal, followed by further sexual abuse by her eldest brother up to the age of thirteen, was to alienate Cilla not only from her family, but also from her real (sexual) female self; a self and body that she now conceived as dirty, worthless, shameful and abandoned, and thus, to be punished, cleansed and hidden:

yeah, you felt filthy all the time, I mean I scrubbed my legs until they were nearly bleeding .... when I was a child, I was scrubbing myself, with our old bloody hard-bristled scrubbing brush that they used to scrub the floors with...and my mother must've seen me doing that *when you were an adolescent, how did you see your body, did you see --*  
-- Oh no, I hid it...I would never look at it really, I can't ever remember looking at it, my body

*So therefore a certain shame about your body?*

Yeah, yeah, definitely a shame about it...and a worse shame when you got your period and it ran down your legs at school...because my periods were horrendous...I hated that part of myself

*And how did it make you feel about yourself, like, can you think how you coped with it?*

Oh no, terrible struggles, terrible struggles...crying in my bed at night, and not knowing ...and then reverting back to the things that had happened to me.... And just feeling that nobody had stood by me.... I felt abandoned...'cause how many people had I told.

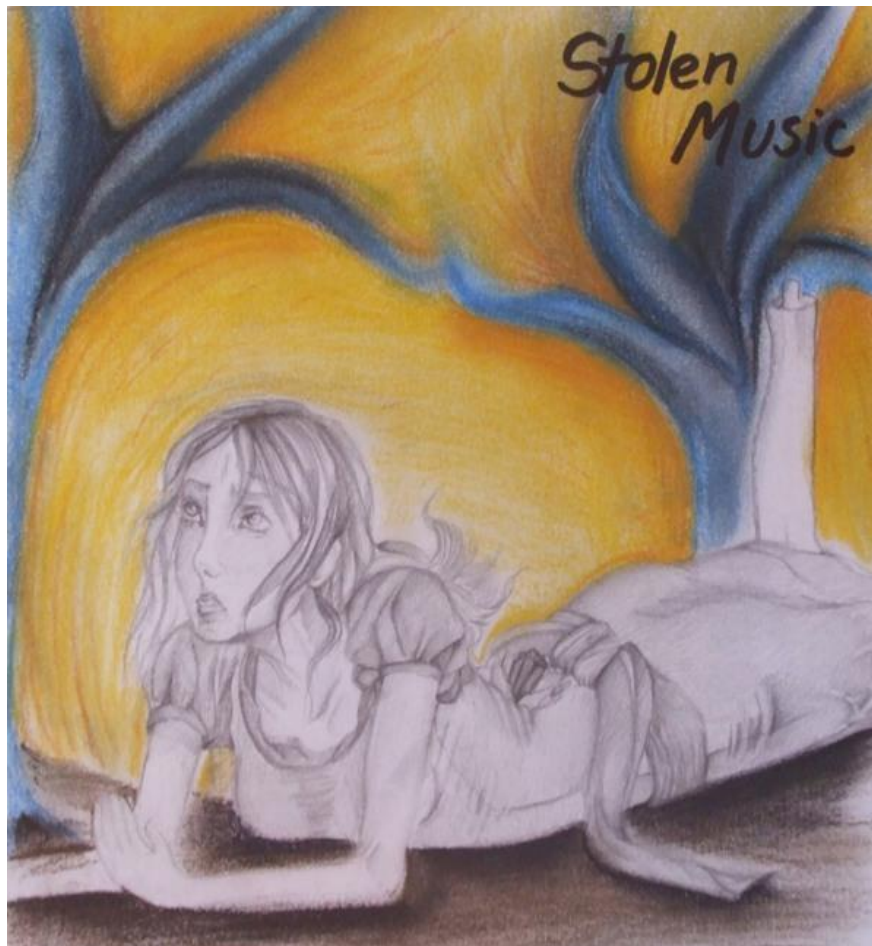


Figure 5:

*Stolen Music*

(Lewie)

Kerry also recalled a similarly pejorative, fragmentary and alienating shift in perception and conception of her female self that began in childhood with the awareness of her father's "immense dislike" of and violence towards women (a dislike and physical/emotional abuse that was deflected by her mother onto Kerry), but that greatly intensified with puberty and the frightening realization that she herself would soon have a womanly body. Having learnt that womanhood was not something to be paternally celebrated and loved, but rather, reviled and despised, and also aware of her father's great disappointment that she had not been a boy, Kerry's sexual development was shrouded with fear, anxiety, and extreme secrecy:

I don't think I was that aware of it, in that pre-teen part of my childhood... but he certainly, it became much more blatant, like I can remember my mother telling me, later on, that he'd been really disappointed that I wasn't a boy....I can really clearly remember my father making some really snide comments about the sorts of physical changes that I was undergoing. I can remember being...I was extremely secretive when I got my period, \*I didn't tell my mother for six months\*...I think I was actually really scared of being punished, for any form of disruption to the status quo....anything....to do with physical change, to do with sexuality....anything to do with basically the experience of becoming a woman, was going to be framed in a negative way.

Thus, like Gina, Kerry experienced from an early age a sense of "depersonalisation" in which her conscious self was experienced as separate from, and "looking in" or taking "the eye-in-the-sky view" of her body. As the observing mind, this self had a material existence for Kerry only insofar as it was contained within a head either without a body, or with a measure of embodiment (e.g. neck) that depended on how comfortable she was with her body at the time:

I had always had [this sensation], right from a very young child, of, not being present....the bird's-eye view of myself....rather than a view from within my body, it was very constantly, the bird's-eye ....a very strong sense of outside, looking in.....In terms of my self-concept.... on my better days, I'm there in my body....I'm quite happy to look at my head, but I don't have any full-length mirrors in my house, at all.

It was the desire to completely escape her body that Kerry identified (later in the interview) as a motivating factor behind her *anorexia*.

Similarly for *Miss P*, puberty brought a dramatic shift in (perception of) the perfect self/form that she had created in early childhood, as she learnt to perceive and reconceive her sexually developing female self/body as a source of imperfection, inferiority, shame,

and embarrassment from which she must escape in order to maintain that “perfect form”. This sense of imperfection was instilled, for example, when a disappointing lack of pubertal development compelled Miss P’s mother to take the high achiever and promising ballerina off to an Auckland growth clinic to be humiliatingly and embarrassingly paraded and photographed in only her underpants, before a panel of male doctors. Whether it was her mother’s disapproving eye, or sexual abuse by her older brother at fourteen, or simply learning to see her sexual female self/body as dirty, inferior and uncontrollable, Miss P was driven to escape this imperfect self by excelling at everything she did, thereby hiding not just her own female imperfections but also her family’s dysfunction from social view, and thus gaining parental recognition and approval:

*Can you remember your feelings about your body and your awareness of your sexual body, and did you like that side of you, or did you dislike it?*

.....no I’d say I disliked it. I don’t remember much about growing up....Oh I was always a late developer and I hated that, I used to be very embarrassed by that...I hated my body when I was 16 and I still had no breasts, ‘n Mum took me to this growth clinic ‘n, see I disappointed her then...something wrong with me...

my mother said had my father ever sexually assaulted me, and I said ‘no, but your son has’ ...‘How could you Miss P, how could you?’

*‘How could you Miss P’ like saying you were to blame? ....and seeing you as the, the dirty one*

Yeah, yeah

*would you say one of [your] identities is as a woman? ...or would that mean failure, or imperfection?*

\*More as imperfection, than failure\*....female is, female is inferior, inferior sex....I was always a fixer-upper, while I’m perfect I can do that.

With pubertal (mal)development threatening her ability to maintain the perfect form and performance, Miss P escaped the fear of failure by imagining herself to be the character she’d played in a school production - *Dorothy* from *The Wizard of Oz* - flying over the rainbow, free of her dirty sexual female self/body and the ultimately unachievable demands to be and remain ‘Miss Perfect’. As *Dorothy*, Miss P could be (loved and accepted for) her real self:

I was away from my body...I just flew...I was in a different world and that’s where I wanted to be

[when I met ‘K’]I was Dorothy and the Wizard of Oz

*Yeah, and what was the difference?*

‘Cause he didn’t have any expectations of me....I was me, he was he....he showed he loved me, and I loved him back

*you'd be able to be your self in that world?*

Yeah.... It's not painful in that world

*Why?*

\*Because you can be yourself\*.

It was this disdain for her own painfully imperfect, uncontrollable sexual female body, and thus, the need to control and escape it, that later played a part in the breakdown of Miss P's previously close relationship to her daughter at the time of her pubertal development:

My daughter and I had a close relationship up till when, her hormones started to change ... everything was out the window

*With puberty and sexual...*

(Miss P nods agreement)

*when your daughter's hormones went crazy, how did you see that? Did you want her to remain the child?*

Yeah...mmm

*Ok, and so, in a way, could that have been threatening, her pubertal development?*

Probably...yeah probably

*So then you could say that it's something that is, in that way passed from mother to daughter, the idea that the development of the body and womanhood, is passed on as the idea of imperfection and dirtiness*

Oh everything you learn gets passed on doesn't it, let's face it, it's in your genes and in your learning process

*And what your daughter saw in the way that you were, and what you felt about your body and keeping things in order, and under control, has she taken that on herself in any way?*

No, she's totally broken away from me, she's the opposite.

All these participants therefore experienced at puberty a major shift in perception, concept and experience of self, as they came to see and judge that (sexual) female self through the pejoratively objectifying, fragmenting, and often violating eyes of others, as intrinsically imperfect, inferior, dirty, shameful and bad, and therefore as needing to prune off, hide or erase from consciousness the offending sexual parts in order to gain parental/social recognition, love and approval.

Gwen was the exception to this story, in that, for her, pubertal development did not bring the same objectifying, degrading and shameful awareness of, and thus, fearful need to reject, slough off, or erase her sexual female body:

*were you aware of your body and.... did you like yourself as a child, and your shape, or did you not --*

-- Never thought about it, no...it didn't come into the question at all

*Ok, and within your family...when your periods started, and when you developed breasts, were you made to feel that that was something to be secret or kept quiet about?*

No, it was just part of growing up...no there was nothing, no, no

*Did you like who you were, or did you ever feel self-conscious or embarrassed about who you were?*

No, no, I never felt that, no.

Although Gwen's sexually developing female self/body was not a source of secrecy or shame, it *was* the focus of a paternally/socially imposed shift in self-perception, with her father insisting that this farm-loving tomboy be a feminine 'girl' and wear dresses rather than the boyish shorts that had freed Gwen to ride horses and build wooden prams for her twin-sister 'K's' dolls. This was a constraint that Gwen readily accepted, but also to some degree evaded. For, having been held back a grade at school, and thus separated from and seen as not as 'bright' as 'K', Gwen left school at fourteen, and, uninterested in boys or the local dances, went to live and work on nearby farms until becoming a herd-tester at eighteen. And when her father was against her taking on this 'man's job', Gwen risked his disapproval in order to pursue her love of rural life:

Mum had been into the shops 'n she'd sent up a top 'n shorts....and when we got home again, Dad wouldn't let me wear those shorts

*Wouldn't he?*

Nooo, oh no no no, that's boys' wear, no, no, no, he wouldn't have that, girls were girls, he was very proud of his girls

*So you never sort of had time for boyfriends, or weren't really interested?*

Oh no, no, no, no, I was too busy doing my own thing

*So when you talk about your father having standards [of dress] or roles that his daughters were meant to play, did they expect all the girls to go off 'n get married*

Oh I expect so....He didn't like it because I was sort of doing a man's job, as he said, he didn't like that...but what else was I going to do, I didn't want to be in town.

The risk was easier to take, however, knowing that Gwen had as her backstop a deep and unbreakable bond of unconditional love with her twin 'K', as well as a deep and abiding Christian faith that God loves and protects from evil those who follow his will:

*how did that bond with your sister develop?...I mean you've obviously kept a sense of closeness...*

Oh yes, it's there, it's there and you can't get rid of it...I wouldn't even try to get rid of it... that bond is there, it's always there

*Yeah, and would you say that's sustained you in many ways, having that closeness with 'K'?*

Oh I would think so, yes, I think so, yes

*So would you say it's an unconditional love then?*

Oh absolutely, absolutely, yes

*what would your principles be, then, as part of who you are, and how you've lived your life in an authentic way?*

We're born into sin, we can't do anything about it, because of Adam and Eve, but we can do

something about that, by accepting Jesus Christ as our personal saviour, and doing what's right in God's sight, and that's what's important to me.

As a devout Christian who later served in the St John's Ambulance for 31 years, Gwen was able to gain the approval of the social/transcendent (if not her own) Father, and thus conceive herself as a 'good' person. It was this need to please, and thus gain the recognition, love and approval of the real, social and/or transcendent father that, for all participants, saw the reconstruction of a *pretend* self/form that might meet current social and/or spiritual ideals of femininity.

### **The Reconstructed, 'Re-formed' Self**

This self-reconstruction followed what was variously described as a closing down, pruning off, hiding, fragmentation, withdrawal and/or sloughing off of the dirty, shameful and imperfect sexual female self/body that for many participants brought a conceptual and/or perceptual separation of mind/head from body, of physical body from its sexual parts, and of conscious mind from sinful, shameful or painful memories, thoughts and images. For all participants, this re-formation of the self was carried out with the aim of retaining or (re)gaining the recognition, love and/or acceptance primarily of parents (particularly the father), and secondarily of peers and social or transcendent authority figures such as teachers, coaches, employers, clergy, or God. And the achievement of this aim required the pursuit and attainment of parental/social expectations and ideals of feminine subjectivity; ideals based not on who one *is*, but on how one should *look* and what one should *do* in order to become the good/perfect female self. Without exception, the conception and construction of this ideal self entailed a refusal or rejection of what participants saw as the traditional, male-defined model and ideals of passive, sexually objectified, subjugated femininity that had, to varying degrees, shaped the lives of their mothers. The reconstructed self might therefore include aspects of the original or core self that satisfied paternal/social ideals of feminine subjectivity (e.g. the slim, beautiful, intelligent, sporty or artistic aspects), thus maintaining a connection to the *real* (but now fragmented) self. But the main aim of this reconstruction was to recreate and regain a sense and appearance of a perfectly formed, self-controlled, and therefore a 'good' and loveable (subjective) self, through the pursuit and attainment of (paternal) ideals of beauty, playful sexual attractiveness, intelligence, slimness, fitness and achievement, but also (sexual) submissiveness. As the following excerpts show, it was the (fear of) perceived or actual

failure to meet these ideals and expectations that ultimately turned the interviewee towards other social/sexual/spiritual relationships, or even towards her real, secreted, sexual self, in search of more achievable ideals and identities that would give apparently perfectly unified, controlled form and function to - and thus ensure the recognition, love, and continued existence of - the subjective self.

For Jean, this reconstructed self took the form of a 'good' persona or *pretend self*, created by pruning off the 'bad' (homo)sexual female parts of her 'core' self, and refashioning a boyishly sporty, intellectual, heterosexual self, that then, from the age of thirteen, led a double life. However, the need and the constant effort required to create and maintain this pretend self brought with it an intense fear of failure, exposure (of personal/parental flaws) and humiliation, and thus a severe "performance anxiety" that self-fulfillingly resulted in a failure to achieve that was then concealed through various strategies of deception. As Jean disclosed:

from thirteen I'd led that double life....I just had this huge secret with 'L'.... I kept [the attraction] a secret, didn't tell a soul, not a soul.... I'd have three or four boyfriends, but they certainly were a ticket, to normality

*So the sporty self....was the thing that you could hold on to, that you knew you were good at*  
Yeah....I probably had quite a bit of praise for my sporting achievements  
*even when in the other areas you felt inadequate?*

Totally, mmm....[Mum]'d get frustrated as a teenager when she'd try and teach me stuff at cooking, but there was definitely a level of anxiety there about cooking 'cause I just didn't... as soon as the anxiety came along, I couldn't think, so I couldn't...and Mum would get frustrated, and impatient and nasty

*So it was quite a strong thing of doing the right thing or the wrong thing, and --*  
-- Hiding it...I would've lied...I was good at lying --  
*-- [You] had no compunction about covering up to keep the image of the good person*  
No.

Maintaining the apparent form and identities of the good pretend self therefore became an anxiety-ridden matter of keeping the bad (sexual) self a secret, and cheating and lying to parents and then others to conceal her failure or inability to achieve the standards required for each subjective identity. With the realizations in her late teens that her sporty self could no longer attain the success required for paternal approval, and, more importantly, that her alcoholic parents could not provide the recognition, love and approval that she needed, Jean entered the workforce only to find the stability and credibility of her *pretend self* undermined by the same performance anxiety:

from probably Intermediate school on, I was aware of their alcoholism...and they both drank more and more, as the years went on. So, you don't have a relationship with an alcoholic really, they've already got one...the bottle

I didn't like Mum, as much, you know, she disappointed me, she wasn't intellectual enough, she was illogical, in fact she was very illogical

I went to work in a bookshop, but I can remember being totally anxious about the till...this performance anxiety of how to do change, and as soon as I got anxious, any instruction they gave me, I couldn't hear it, I couldn't remember it so I'd ask them again, and then I'd have to do all of these secret things, to sort of try and make out as if I did know how to do it.

It was marriage and motherhood and a new identity as the good wife and mother that brought a stability and security to Jean's 'ideal' pretend self/form that allowed her to clearly separate it from the 'bad' concealed (homo)sexual self, thereby allowing her attraction to women to be covertly explored within the safety of heterosexual gatherings:

I never talked to [my husband] about being interested in women. So it was a complete double life....not talking about sex and relationships would've been totally normal. No role-modelling for talking about things of that emotional kind of depth...we wouldn't even've had the wordage.

Even after the marriage ended in her thirties, Jean's identity as the good heterosexual (divorced) mother sustained her perfect pretend self/form through a long-term affair with a bisexual woman, and then, at fifty, entry into a long-term lesbian relationship with 'S', by now 'natural' strategies of concealment protecting the good form and existence of this socially acceptable persona:

*why did you go for 15 years, like, out of your marriage?*

I don't know, just...just not stepping, again that secret of pretending in the community, going to the tennis club, and they might say 'oh, have you found a guy yet?' and I'd go 'no' *so you were wanting to keep up the image?*

Mmm, and I had a girl, at least one child at home, and I was still wanting to keep up all the normalities

*'S' was quite happy to, she was obviously wanting to be closeted about it....as well...*

We just do it naturally....so we would be the same, have the same languaging when we're out. If somebody said.... 'have you been married?', [we'd say] 'yeah, not married at the moment' ....or we'd ignore each other.

For Jean, the need to lead a double - and therefore false and deceitful - life was driven by fear of losing other people's recognition and admiration of her as a person, a shattering of her *pretend self* promising social humiliation, exclusion, and subjective non-existence.



What gave an added unity, stability and goodness of form to Jean's perfect self, thereby allowing her to live comfortably within her double life, was the fact that she did not conceive the core aspects of that self as female, but rather, as strongly *masculine*, a conception supported by an *astrological* identity and belief system that also cosmically justified the pretend self and double (sexual) life:

[the soul may choose to be gay in this lifetime because] we wouldn't know what this feels like, unless we've known that. . . .so that it's not like it's such a sin

*Does it feel like....you've got....different identities, different ways of behaving in different worlds?*

Yep...and I'm comfortable with that....the core self is still there though....my core self goes everywhere....when I describe my core self to somebody, it's not as a female, it's like my deep interest in communication or my deep inter...nothing to do with female.... my chart is quite male orientated, I was born with more male thinking, more male energy

*So the identities that you might use, that would describe your life, such as sportsperson, mother, wife...counsellor....would you include the identity of 'woman'?*

I wouldn't, no, I wouldn't.



Figure 6:

*Bound*

(Lewie)

Similarly, for *Fleur*, the fear and sense of worthlessness instilled by paternal violence, the secrecy and shame of sexual development, and the failure and rebellion that brought humiliating expulsion from school were all hastily buried beneath a false self or 'face' that, in covering the real self, would be pleasing and likeable to others. Alienated from her 'hated', abusive Pakeha father, and denied affection from her loved, but abused, silenced

Māori mother, Fleur left their farm at sixteen and set off to Sydney to create an attractive, successful, socially acceptable identity for herself. Raising her age by two years, Fleur secured a job in a chartered accountant's office, rented a small flat in Neutral Bay, and made a few friends. But despite gaining a measure of independence and control over her life, Fleur knew the self she was presenting to the world to be false; a robotic self disconnected from the hurt, angry, alienated self buried deep within. As she describes it:

*And so that time in Australia, did you develop in a lot of ways...did you regain some sense of confidence?*

I don't think I did, no.... when I was in Aussie, I wasn't really happy...you know, I wasn't happy happy....you sort of get a co...I got a complex, you know

*A complex, like an inferiority complex?*

Yeah, and it was like, I was angry and... I didn't want to know who I was, really....I was trying to please other people....

*Would you say that that was like putting on a --*

-- A face, yes

*A face...that you thought others would like?*

Would like more than, the person that was...than the real me...you know what I mean?

*So, would you say back then, you could've looked in the mirror and actually not seen yourself?*

Yeah, not seen who I am....Yeah, just a shell...just an image --

*-- Someone's face and it wasn't really you?*

Yeah, yeah, it wasn't me...'cause I think with all the trauma, and...pain 'n that, that...it's with you for life, eh

*Yeah, and perhaps a numbness to your feelings?*

Yeah, yeah, yeah....I never expressed, yeah...just kept them all to myself 'n, bottled a lot of things up....Like I said, I just felt like I was, just on automatic pilot, 'n just going through the motions....it was like somebody else, I was a robot....I worked, went home, went out.

As a socially defined and accepted, likeable robot, Fleur could no longer feel the presence, pain or even the instincts and intuitions of her real self, and thus, at twenty-six and wanting the recognition, love and affection she'd been denied, married a man who ultimately revealed himself to be, like her father, jealous, abusive and controlling. Needing to be the perfect, pleasing wife, Fleur went on a strict diet, losing 16kgs, only to find that her husband became even *more* jealous and controlling. Finally, after being pressured into an abortion, Fleur left the three-year marriage and returned home to Hinuera, all her efforts to construct a slim, attractive, intelligent, successful and therefore a good, loveable self reduced to nothing as *she* was reduced to the bad, worthless, failed wife/woman:

*So you lost weight to keep him happy, and when you lost it --*

-- To keep him happy, and when I lost the weight, he was worse.... I had an abortion to him, 'cause I fell pregnant and he didn't want the baby....I had no respect for him, I didn't

respect myself for doing what I let him do

*So you went against your own instincts to please him?*

I did, yeah....when I got with him, it was like, 'shit I'm back to square one'.

Returning to the family farm, Fleur lived with her mother for five years, before the latter's death. Her father having died several years earlier, Fleur was able to reconnect on some level, and share some affection with her mother, though neither was able to speak of the secrets or the deep anger, resentment and loss of self that both had experienced as women; an anger that her mother contained for fifty years to avoid social disapproval, until it could be contained no longer:

Mum told me, she said back then, women with kids didn't leave their husbands, because that was a no-no, you just didn't do it, you were a scarlet woman, in society.

Mum just picked up 'G's' walking stick, and said 'this is what you've put me through all these fuckin' years', and she had him on the ground...I had to take the stick off her, 'n she just... must've belted him about eight times, just, ohh just all that anger....I said 'Mum you'd better stop, you'll kill 'im'...'this is what he's put me through'.

In the years following her mother's death, Fleur entered another relationship, gave birth to a daughter, 'T', and then, when the same pattern of alcohol-fuelled disharmony and violence began to emerge, left her partner to set up home with her daughter. It was her relationship to 'T', however, that provided the beginnings of Fleur's reconnection to, and reconstitution of her real self, through the bond of love developed between mother and child:

*You were sort of lost the whole time? Or living a kind of an alter ego sort of life?*

Yeah, yeah, yeah....I, like I haven't really found myself till I had 'T' really...'cause I've gone through so much...barriers, that I've, it's only now I've found the real me, and I'm forty-two this year

*So in a way, you've brought the bits together, would you say Fleur?*

Yes, yep the jigsaw's come back...yep, I've got my girl 'n...

With Fleur's sexual, womanly self no longer having to be reshaped to fit the ideal form, meet the expectations, and thus gain the approval of others, she has begun to put together again the pieces of the jigsaw of what was her real whole childhood self; a slow process sometimes interrupted by (alcohol-driven) outbursts towards 'T' of the same hurt, anger and frustration felt by her mother:

Like I get, when I get really angry with 'T', I smack her, but, I worry myself because

sometimes, I get to a point where I can't stop smacking her because I'm just so, wild.

*last time when we talked, you were saying about with T 'n that, sometimes you'd lose your temper 'n, get a bit angry about stuff*

Yeah...I don't get so angry now.

Fleur's realization during the interview process that this deep-seated anger was at her father's abuse of her mother and the children's animals, coupled with a shift into her own farm cottage that became a place of self-discovery, -possession and -expression for both Fleur and 'T', saw a positive shift in Fleur's perception of her self, and in her relationship to 'T', and also T's father:

I'm stronger now, I don't depend on him....it's my way now....I don't have to take it from [men]....I don't have to do it their way, I can do, it's my way....now I've got [my own space], I'm coming out 'n being who I want to be.

Through her desire to be an independent woman and a good mother, by providing 'T' with the recognition, love and encouragement of her real, subjective self that she did not have, Fleur is putting back together the pieces of her own real self again; a self that, for the first time in her life, she is prepared and happy to perceive as wholly and positively *female*:

Yes I would, I'd be happy out here....I mean I'd love to have pigs, a couple of pigs, a couple of sheep....get a house cow, you know....this is, yes, this is bringing me to where I want to be, where I'm happy to be....I've found my self, here

*you want people to see who you are again*

Yes...to see the real you, and not someone that you've tried to be, for all that time...

*in that picture of yourself, that image of yourself ....do you see yourself as a woman as well?*

I do now

*Now that you're the real self?*

Yep, yep

*So 'T' will have a different view of herself as a woman*

And just be who she is, be who she wants to be, that's what I want to give her.

As mentioned earlier, although *Gwen* did not experience this same sense of shame and embarrassment about her pubertal female self, and thus the fragmenting and sloughing off of sexual parts of that self, she was nevertheless shaped and constrained by her father's wish for his tomboyish daughter to be an attractively feminine girl who might (like her sisters) marry or work in an office or dress shop, rather than taking on a 'man's job' as a herd-tester. Gwen therefore knew that she would have to disregard her parents' wishes to be true to her self and follow her love of rural life by pursuing what was a traditionally masculine role, but which was, for Gwen, simply an expression of her natural self:

*in terms of gender roles....you could say that women are in many ways channelled into that, to doing the motherhood thing*

In those days they were, yes, but that wasn't me, and I don't think my mother could change me

*when you went herd-testing, he wasn't really happy about that...*

Ooh no, 'cause that was a man's job....and he felt that it was too heavy or, you know, women shouldn't be doing it, but there were a lot of women doing it

*you risked disapproval in a way, didn't you?*

Yes, yeah...yes....you have to be natural, and naturally be yourself.

Whilst Gwen may have failed to meet her father's traditional ideals, the socially identified self that she constructed and presented to the world - as a herd-tester, sportswoman, Girl Guide leader, devout Christian, St John's Ambulance officer, and later, a rural delivery owner/operator - *was* able to successfully maintain the ideals and expectations associated with these identities/uniforms. It was these stable, admired social and spiritual identities, allied with her sister K's unconditional love, a disinterest in sexual relationships, and a perception of herself as masculine in her thinking, interests and attitudes, that enabled Gwen to be, know, and subjectively define herself as a (boyishly) self-directed, successful, asexually pure, spiritually disciplined, and thus 'good' self:

*you've done things that gave you quite a bit of autonomy and independence*

Oh yes, well virtually I was my own b...yes that's right, yes

*So then you could say you've actually probably got a more masculine view of the world?*

More than likely

*A masculine way of thinking about things?*

Yeah

*would you say, you've wanted to always be a good person, and be seen as a good person?*

Of course.

This is not to say, however, that Gwen saw her womanly self as intrinsically good or equal. On the contrary, her Christian beliefs decreed that, because of Eve's original sin, woman is born sinful and weaker than man, and must therefore serve as the 'neck' that supports man as the 'head'. Hence, although both may make decisions and work together, as man's 'helpmeet', woman must ultimately submit to his will:

See, man is the head, God made man the head, Adam was the head

*Right, ok, he sets the rules sort of thing, or governs the house, he's the head of the family?*

Well, he should do, but woman is the neck...and the head can't do anything without the neck turns it....[but he] makes the decisions...he has the final say.

*So....[because of original sin] you can never actually end up being a good person*

*....you're always striving everyday to be good*

That's right, to do what's right, yes.

Thus, for Gwen, to be a virtuous person in God's eyes was to constantly think, act and present herself in a way that made the sinful female self good; that is, by asking for God's forgiveness for past sins, by "accepting Jesus Christ as our personal saviour and doing what's right in God's sight", and by covering and thus protecting one's self with the "armour of God":

It's like in Ephesians, where you have to put on the whole armour of God...you know, from the helmet 'n the breast plate, and go right down your body; if you've got a sticky problem.... so you put the whole armour of God on, and that protects you, it's amazing.

*as long as you feel that you are doing right in God's sight, then you feel you're a good person, and you can....like yourself for who you are?*

Yes, yes absolutely.

By spiritually cleansing her self of, and protecting her self from evil, Gwen was able to construct and maintain a whole, identity-based sense or concept of her asexual, masculine (female) self as a good and likeable person. This wholeness of self was threatened, however, on two particular occasions: firstly, when 'K' married (at 21) and moved to Christchurch, thereby separating Gwen from her source of stability and unconditional love:

I wasn't very well for a little while after K got married, but certainly was no depression....I'd have a meal and I'd lose it, 'n that type of thing....I was just sort of generally upset I suppose  
*And, so that would be the time when your sense of wholeness and stability, or control of your life, had been shaken or, or taken away*

Well, part of you had gone, yes.... Oh, it was a big loss to me, big loss

*Yes, and how did you fill the gap, or the void, or how did it affect you?*

Oh I think I was just lonely...but then I had to soon get used to that...I had a job to do, and I just got on with it.

And secondly, when, after forty years of living on her own or with female companions, Gwen decided (at 64) to marry a man considerably older than herself, whom she had known and respected as an elder of her Open Brethren church. Finding herself sleeping with a man for the first time in her life, Gwen became embarrassed that others would (mistakenly) see her as sexual:

*How did that feel getting married....did you like it?*

It was very strange...very strange, I mean, I hadn't ever been with a man, and, you know, it was extremely strange, and I suppose I felt embarrassed too

*In what way?*

Well, the fact that I was actually sleeping with a man, in a man's bed, was, you know, strange....but 'N' being sick and having heart congestion, [sex] was out of the question.

When Gwen's seemingly whole, self-disciplined, good, loved self threatened to fragment, it was her work identity and achievement, her husband's identity and standing as a Godly man, and an ability to distance herself from her problems that allowed this reconstructed self to endure and survive. As she put it,

You have to be careful, that....if you've got a problem, you don't dwell on it...problems should be out there, right out there, and that's where they stay.... I don't take them aboard, as such...or I might say 'look God, that's your problem, not mine, you deal with it', and he does

*So you separate that problem from your identity, and from your self as a whole, and that helps you stay strong within yourself?*

Yes, that's right...it's a great help.

For young *Lewie*, however, reconstructing and maintaining such a whole, stable, identity-based sense/concept of her ordinary female self as a good and thus recognized, loved and accepted (subjective) self was not so easy. Having for her first seven years been the focus of her mother and older siblings' attention, the arrival of a baby sister brought feelings of maternal/familial rejection that, along with growing embarrassment at her premature sexual development, initiated a fragmentation and loss of (unconditional love of) her whole 'original' self as Lewie learnt to reconceive that sexually developing female self/body as imperfect, inferior, shameful and isolated. Feeling alienated from family and school-friends, Lewie followed her best friend into the Mormon Church, and, in initially adopting its strict and exclusive moral codes, came to see herself as the "black sheep" of the family.



Figure 7:

*The Black Sheep*

(Lewie)

Within the Mormon community and its ascetically ordered, regulated way of life, Lewie found a sense of belonging, and a seemingly secure identity as a good, disciplined, and admired girl:

*What held you there for so long?*

Well, it was basically feeling like I belonged, you know 'cause they were all like 'oh Lewie you're so great, you're a convert, you're being so strong standing up for what you believe in', and basically I mean, looking back on it, it was probably just flattery really.

But as the adolescent Lewie became more aware of biblical teachings that depicted her own sexual, menstruating female self/body as the 'seductress' needing to be restrained from the "Great Sin" of forbidden sex or else face exclusion from the church community, rising scepticism forced her to abandon not only the church, but also the Mormon school that Lewie had attended for two years. As she recalled it,

they're very strict on your personal life, I mean, before you go, you have to be interviewed on your worthiness to attend....and if you're a virgin....if you're sexually pure basically....I really hate how sex is treated both within religion and in the outside world, 'cause I've experienced both, you know like, I mean it's just disgusting really, asking a twelve year-old if they're a virgin and basing their worth upon their sexuality, whereas outside it, everyone's so sexually outrageous, and sex is just the centre of the universe....[teenage] girls are always the sluts, the whores.

However, despite her disdain for dualistic religious and social conceptions of the female as either virgin or whore, the teenage Lewie found herself seemingly unable to free her concept and experience of her own sexual female self/body from connotations of dirtiness, evil, shame and guilt, and thus, the need to slough off the dirty sexual female parts and reshape herself into the ideal feminine form/identity that could be loved by others, and by herself. For Lewie, the form and existence of this ideal self, initially based on looks and achievement, came to depend solely upon her identity and performance as an *artist*. Lewie's artwork encapsulates her experience of this de- and re-construction of her originally whole, unconditionally loved, child self in the story of *The Hare*, *The Bear*, and *The Doll*;





Figure 8: *The Hare*



*The Bear*



*The Doll*



(Lewie)

‘It’s about girls specifically, and how they become a person, what makes a person a person in themselves....and what happens when that is obstructed in childhood ‘n stuff. So I created three characters which were the *Hare*, the *Bear* and the *Doll*, and they were all played by little girls, I dressed them up...there’s the *teddy bear*, and she was just in a bear suit, and they all had a toy which represented what they were. So....at the beginning, the *Doll* was sort of like the show-pony, she’s what a little girl is supposed to be and what she is supposed to be throughout the rest of her life. And the *Hare*, is almost like, and I put her as the youngest one to just be a bit, you know, sort of sexual kind of, the one that wants to be good enough.... but she’s supposed to be playful....and then there was the *Bear*, and I switched the *Hare* and the *Bear* around because the *Hare* should’ve technically been the older one, and the *Bear* should’ve been the younger one, ‘cause the *Bear* was unconditional kind of love, but I switched them round to show what happens if these roles are reversed, and if a girl is too young and has these expectations on her when she’s too young’.



Figure 9: *Path to Perfection* (Lewie)

In the hopscotch that signifies the years and stages of Lewie’s life, the *Bear* (the originally whole, unconditionally loved, but then sexually imperfect self) is succeeded by the *Hare* (the boyishly playful, sexual, performative self, constantly and madly striving to meet parental/social expectations and, therefore, to exist and be recognized and loved by others), and the *Doll* (the perfectly and eternally beautiful, youthful, feminine appearance that is, for the adolescent *Hare* girl, constantly pursued, but ultimately unattainable). As the *Hare*, Lewie constantly and even obsessively strove to achieve the standards of perfection, firstly, within Mormonism, and later, in her school art, academic grades, and friendships, that would clothe her imperfect sexual female (*Bear*) self/body with a stable, unified, recognized subjective identity or form of existence:

you’re shaped by your actions, and who you are, like, not who you are but what you do, and it’s always what you do, not who you are really....I guess it’s been like that my whole life because I think Mormonism was one of those things - if I could be a good Mormon, then I could be, you know, and then for a while I had nothing, if I could be a good friend...that kind of failed....then it was only last year that I started to think ‘well maybe, if I can be a high academic achiever’ (laughter) you know, it’s always something, I always have a project.

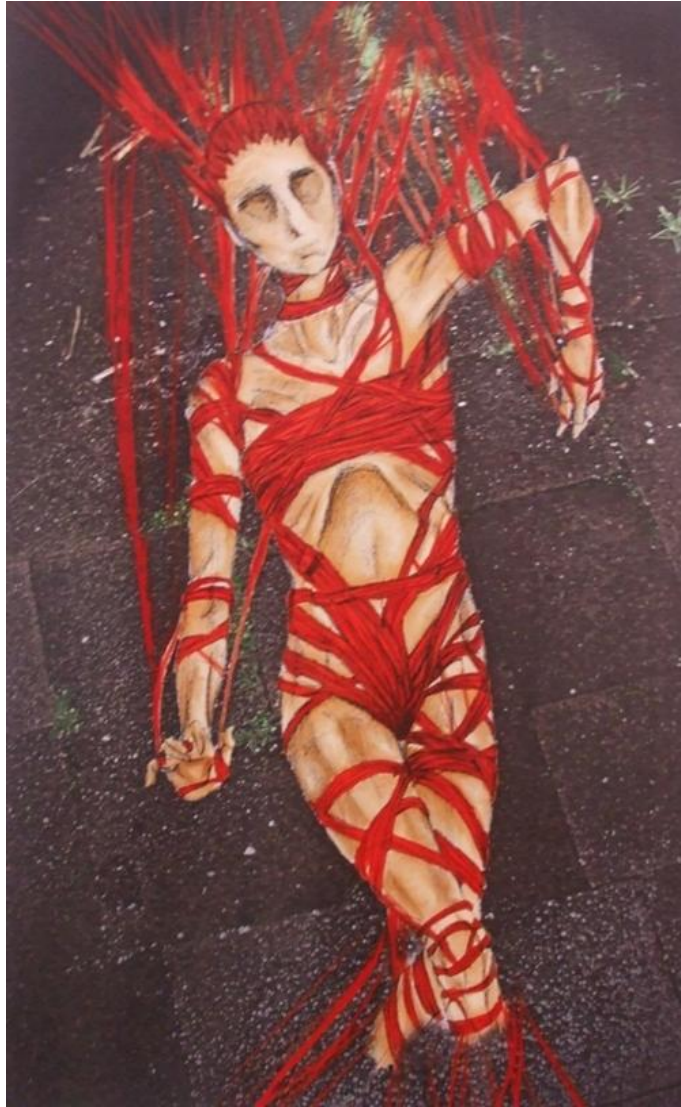


Figure 10: *Pursuing the Ideal Ego* (Lewie)

Knowing that she must daily re-attain and maintain the standards of performance required for the perfect form - and thus the enduringly recognized, loved existence - of her performatively recreated self, Lewie's life became consumed by a sense of loss, depression, and emptiness, her real self reduced to an empty cup, drained of goodness and love, that *must*, each day, be refilled:

all the time my whole life, it's like, a constant war with myself....waking up, feeling like crap, but you have to get up....it's like a cycle, because after a while it gets incredibly emotionally exhausting and you start behaving in a terrible way, and start treating people differently, and you've got to still control it and maintain this sort of thing that you've created for your self in front of these people, because otherwise you lose friends, and then you sort of lose a lot of other stuff....I have to get up and over the course of the day, it's like filling the cup....I have to kind of fill the cup during the day, 'n then I go to sleep and it gets emptied....So I have to, physically....I have to make myself feel alright a lot of the time

*Did you always feel like that as a child?*

No.... it only really properly started from about thirteen onwards when you're, a teenager 'n you have to, be certain things.

To Lewie, refilling the cup meant constantly producing great art, achieving top grades for it, and therefore being and excelling as an artist. But the pressure and fear of failure to do so, which self-fulfillingly resulted in an actual failure to perform, and thus, the prospect of her own non-existence, found Lewie turning her attention, and her existential need to achieve, onto her own sexual self and body. For, if the *Hare* Girl could not be the perfect artist in the eyes of others, then at least she could refashion her *Doll* self to be more beautiful and sexually attractive, or even more boyishly childlike in her own eyes, thereby attaining the measure of purposeful achievement and goodness of self/form that would ensure her ongoing existence:

*the thing to me that relates [all these identities] is you're saying you could be good; it will make you good, and by being good, you'll be loved and accepted*

Yeah... 'n it will give your existence some sort of purpose

*what exists alongside of that is the fear [of] 'what happens if I can't be good at that?...then --*  
-- I am nothing, yeah.... like my whole world started depending....on what mark I got for my art, you know, and if I didn't get that, I was absolutely nothing....I feel bad because I haven't been able to do it, 'cause I'm too scared to do it now, and I just can't, like I'm afraid of failing to myself....when you fail at it....you feel like you're nothing.

some days I'd want it to be a very sexual body, and other days I would want it to be a completely unsexual sort of boyish kind of body...at the beginning of it, I started wearing, this hat that was like a little Victorian boy chimney-sweeper kind of hat, because I wanted to be small and, like a child....I'm fine with my gender, but I guess it's almost like, I've always liked making 'n dressing in costumes, so it's like becoming someone else or something else for a little while....it's like playing a game of pretend for the day, like a child game of pretend where you're a child again, you know?

Turning her body into a work of art or a 'pretend' self that was either a playfully sexually attractive, or a boyishly desexualized image or persona was Lewie's way of creating and showing *to* her self a form *of* her self as the 'good', successful person. As she put it, "It's like you're achieving something because you can't achieve what you used to be able to achieve".



Figure 11: *Performative Selves*



(Lewie)

For, whether the cultivated feminine beauty, or the desexualized, defeminized child that she once was and wished to become again, these pretend images obscured and disguised the mirrored image of her real, displeasing, sexual female body:

I don't like looking in the mirror to be honest...I guess I mainly see my face, I look at my face, more so than I do my body...I pay more close attention to my face, because to me my face is, the thing to show off, if that makes sense, rather than my body, I don't see my body as something to particularly...show off as such...[Mum] can't understand why I'm so prudey and covery-uppy...because she sees bodies as beautiful, and undirty.

But Lewie's self-transformation was to be carried out not just on canvas, or with costume, but also on her own sexual female self/body, as the lingering Mormon (and also maternally) instilled conception of that self as dirty, shameful and bad became suddenly and horribly intensified with the onset of sexual activity.<sup>79</sup> For Lewie, this intensification involved a shattering experience in which, following (hetero)sexual intimacy,

I'd feel incredibly bad...and that was awful, like, I just felt like rock bottom...kind of disgusting and stuff...I started feeling detached from myself and I had this horrible experience, where afterwards I just shut my eyes, and I was like 'oh god', and it felt like

<sup>79</sup>This seeming contradiction between Lewie's and my account of her mother Gina's attitude to (sexual) bodies is explained in the exploration of Gina's maternally/intellectually reconstructed self (see page 205).

every single one of my limbs was completely detached from me, and I was just this...  
chopped up sort of person....I felt like I was just sort of floating in the middle of nowhere.

This sexually induced destruction of her good, boyishly feminine form, combined with an intense fear of artistic failure, resulted in a loss of ability, identity, and ultimately, of self, that created in Lewie the need to punish, purify, and even erase her bad sexual female body, by denying it food and growth:

My entire existence depended on that one, that mark....and so then, what had become really positive for me, my place of peace, which was art, turned around and became a demon, and was something that I had to feel crap about my self....I felt like I was turning into this waste of human space - that I'd completely, lost my self

*you went through that phase of feeling like you weren't being successful in your art, and you weren't achieving, then your attention turned to your body...thinking 'ok if I get a bit slimmer*  
-- Yeah, but....I wanted to become thinner, because....it was almost like being a child again, if that makes sense, and I've always hated my breasts, so I found that I could wear some of my clothes, now, that would look slightly baggy and so they'd make my breasts look smaller, so I looked...more like a child than a...voluptuous sort of woman, because I never, got to look like a ^child if that makes sense, I don't remember being allowed to look like a child and I always wanted that....I always did really thin sort of people in my artwork, so...it was almost like well, if I couldn't do the art \*then maybe my body could be the art\*.

Food therefore became the artistic tool that Lewie used to reconstruct her dirty, all too sexual female self/body into that of the child that Lewie wished she could have been:

For most of it I'm not really rigorously trying to lose weight or anything in the sense that, I stop myself from eating, because like....I eat when I'm hungry, but a lot of the time I wasn't hungry, not at all hungry, I didn't want to eat because eating reminded me that I was a person, if that makes sense, it made me feel sick, just shoving the food down my throat was like shoving more crap down into me...it was like a phobia of food, it was like 'no-ho-ho', like...I guess at the very start, like a few months ago, I started feeling bad about myself....so, I would say 'right, as punishment you're not going to eat till say 4 o'clock today'.

Thus, for Lewie, who was always very slim, the avoidance of eating was not about weight-loss *per se*. Rather, it expressed a deep fear of making her already dirty, bad, real (sexual) self/person even dirtier, while the smallness, desexualization, redemption, and sense of artistic achievement that came from nutritionally denying, disciplining, and re-forming her self/body promised a return of that self to its originally whole, child state of purity, goodness, and unconditional love:

*So....it wasn't about not eating and starving yourself to get slim....there was some other*

*reason and some other sense of gratification that you were getting from it?*

It makes me feel like a kid again, it's like I was back then....it's like I've grabbed on to what I was, if that makes sense?

*Sure, and would you say then, that by going back to that childlike state, that's sort of an escape from that whole thing [of expectations and failure]?*

\*Yeah...mmm\*... [but] it's hard to get [back to] the total complete self and soul, that had no expectations when you've got the expectations ~ because the expectations are sort of what rip you apart a bit, if you know what I mean? .... \*and sort of fragment, defragment you\* .... we're just making this huge bomb really in each female....that is ready to go off at any time.



Figure 12: *Death by Expectation* (Lewie)

### **The Eating Disordered Self**

Although Lewie did not consider her restricted eating to be an eating disorder as such, but rather, a desexualizing, artistic means to reshape her bad sexual self into the good, self-approved, childish form, she interpreted her friend's *bulimia* in the following way:

maybe it's about an *achievement* of something and trying to be good enough, and so, if you've lost what you once were or once had, or once could do, you'd turn it on yourself and kind of be like 'ok, if I can lose weight, I'm actually achieving something and doing something here, and I can do something'....and again it would empower you....it's just to get rid of the awful feelings all the time, and she feels so bad about herself, she said sometimes she can almost see herself growing in front of the mirror.

Lewie's interpretation of her friend's bulimic state roughly describes the experience of the six research participants who experienced an eating disorder at some time in their lives. If "trying to be good enough" is about reconstructing and re-presenting the dirty, bad, deformed, sexual female self in a form that strives but fails to meet the expectations and ideals imposed by parents, peers, and society at large, then *anorexia/bulimia/orthorexia* may be a self-purifying, self-reshaping means to achieve the perfect (child) form and function, and thus the ongoing, loved existence of the *real* (bad, sexual) self, in the face of a (feared) disintegration of the socially *reconstructed* self.



Figure 13: (by Kayla Wright, 17)<sup>80</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Although Kayla was not a participant, I came into contact with her while writing this thesis, while she was bulimic, and several months prior to her suicide in November 2008. I have included some of her artwork as a tribute, and as it may reflect the thoughts, feelings, and self-perceptions of the eating disordered participants. Retrieved June 1, 2011, from <http://www.flickr.com/photos/26142764@N07/>



This account encapsulates the experience of Lewie's mother *Gina*, for example, who, having learnt from her own mother to perceive her sexually developing body as dirty, smutty, and to be hidden, and having then engaged in sexual activity with her boyfriend, saw no alternative but to marry in order to escape the repressive sexual constraints and certain parental disapproval that would not only confirm but *magnify* her conception of herself as a "bad person":

after...a short time, a year or whatever having this boyfriend, I had sex with him, and so I really believed that because I had sex with him, I had to marry him. And my twin sister got married to her boyfriend when she was nineteen, and I was desperate to get away from my family...and my Mum in particular, and so I married my boyfriend and went to live with my twin sister

*Why were you desperate to get away from your family?*

The control...that kind of control, and that kind of...the putting down of sexuality I guess.

Gina also recognized, however, that her mother's perception of the sexual female body as dirty and sinful, and the consequent shame and secrecy between mother and daughter around pubertal development, had its origin in traditional patriarchal beliefs and rituals such as the high Anglican practice of "churching" to which her mother was subjected after the birth of each of her children. As Gina described it, because of her supposed sexual impurity, "a woman was not allowed to go outside of the home...until she'd been churched, to cleanse herself after having a baby". Deeply offended by this practice, and by the growing awareness that her husband expected her to conform to the traditional feminine role as his passive, submissive wife, Gina became "an angry feminist", protesting and rejecting the feminine ideals that had shaped and constrained her mother, and embracing contemporary ideals of feminine independence and achievement by throwing herself into a nursing career. Attaining within two years the rank of highly responsible charge nurse, Gina carved an identity for and concept of her subjective self as a slim, beautiful, successful, highly competent, and therefore a *good* person, a concept strengthened by her own dislike of or indifference to sexual activity, and the ability to disconnect her intellectual self from anything to do with her (bad) sexual body:

Woh, I guess I ignored it, I mean I was a sexual body, I was married, and...on the times where, you know times I wasn't remotely interested in sexuality, I didn't actually, I had no interest, and it would become very...my husband would demand or would want sexual relationship which is what married people actually do, and it actually, I remember disconnecting because, it was easier just to give in.

Gina thereby began to reconceive and identify her socially/professionally reconstructed self as a (feminist) intellect, a mind and brain, not a physical, sexually desiring body, in this way continuing her childhood practice of separating from and transcending her (naughty, bad) sexual body:

My focus was on being a good charge nurse, and actually just getting on with the job, and my work, and actually just being, you know, who I was, I wasn't remotely interested, in even looking at other people's sexuality --

-- *Because you didn't want to look at your own? ...you didn't need to look at your own?*

I don't know, I haven't a clue, I don't know, I mean it just wasn't part of my framework.... when you actually go for, the empowerment, and the opportunity and freedom of self, in some way for me there's been a trade-off, from that, with the physical...a disconnect....my intellect was my solace, my brain, my mind was my place.

The integrity of Gina's socially reconstructed, admired, subjective self was threatened, however, firstly by her husband's perception of her as "just a stupid bloody woman" who should bow to his demands, and secondly, by an incident at the hospital where, as a charge nurse concerned by and questioning doctors' treatment of a terminally ill patient, Gina's actions were severely criticized, and she received a 'toasting' from her superiors. Both of these threats to her subjective selfhood were ultimately resolved, with Gina leaving her marriage and England for a new life in New Zealand. But, in doing so, Gina left behind the identities that had shaped and constituted her reconstructed self, this destabilized self then threatening to shatter when accosted by her best friend's husband who - in seeing Gina as a slim, beautiful, now single woman - pressured her for sex. This distressing event was the beginning of a two-year experience of *bulimia* in which Gina's weight and size 'yo-yoed' as she struggled with her appearance and sexuality:

I went on the contraceptive pill and gained some weight.... and I struggled with that weight 'n hated it, because, it was alien to me. And....then when my marriage split up, I actually, lost some weight because of the emotional trauma, and stopped eating, and then, one of my best friends' husbands came round to try 'n have sex with me....and I found that very deeply distressing, and so, I started off on a bulimic kind of eating to get fat again; I was never fat, but I mean, perceptually fat....so that I didn't actually attract people, I didn't want that

*So it was a defence mechanism?*

Yep, mmm, and then I would hate it, and so then I would actually, lose it, not quickly, and so my weight yo-yoed, for probably two years, where I was under significant emotional turmoil really, based on my physical appearance and sexuality....I didn't want the male attention really

*Would you say that was a way then, of attempting to desexualize yourself, to remove the male gaze from you?*

Yeah, but I still wanted to be beautiful, I didn't want to be ugly.

Here was Gina's quandary: she wanted to be beautiful, desirable, and thus meet social ideals of feminine subjectivity, but in doing so, risked losing that (asexual) subjectivity and identity through men's reduction of her self/body to a dirty, used sexual object. So to binge and make her body 'fat' comforted and protected Gina from that threat to her constructed identity, but also threatened the ideals that *gave* her that identity - her beauty and slim sexual attractiveness:

I was binge-eating, but I'd want to lose the weight, and so I...I was in that state for about two years, easily two years, where I hated myself when I got to 62 kg, I despised myself when I got there, because I knew I shouldn't be there....I wanted to be beautiful and I wanted to be, a sexual being, but when I was a beautiful sexual being, I didn't like the attention...yeah, it was a strong yo-yo, it went up, you know, substantial, and 5kg is not much, but when you think, 5kg is a lot, up 'n down 'n, up 'n down 5kg in a week, it's huge.

However, Gina's bulimic bingeing and purging to gain and then lose weight was not designed to gain attention and approval from others. Rather, she experienced it as an *inner* battle to make the 'bad' person 'good' in Gina's own eyes:

But I wanted to be beautiful for me, I didn't want to be beautiful for other people, I wanted to be beautiful for me

*why?*

Because, it made me feel beautiful, because, because beauty is within really isn't it

*But this is surface beauty too though, isn't it?*

I know, I know, but I wasn't distinguishing between the two

*So by [hav]ing surface beauty meant you're beautiful within....a beautiful person, inside and out?*

Yep...and by being, physically not beautiful somehow made me not beautiful inside, somehow it made me a bad person because I had a beautiful body and I was exploiting it.

For the bulimic Gina, then, to purge her body, starve off her "alien" weight, and once again have a slim, beautiful body, inside and out, presented visible evidence and confirmation to herself that she was indeed a 'good' person, and not the 'bad' person who had allowed that body to be used in sexually objectifying ways that rendered it (and her) dirty and shameful. Gina's *bulimia* was therefore not about a fear or fatness or a desire for slimness *per se*, but about comforting, protecting, purifying, beautifying, and thus redeeming and *reforming* her real, bad, sexual female self and body, in the face of a shattering of her socially reconstructed self/identity:

*So it wasn't fatness that was the issue?*

So it wasn't fatness, no, no it wasn't...but, it was a comfort too, food was a comfort, and so I

think comfort eating, and then, um, that, *that awful sexuality thing* where I didn't want to be too attractive either, but yet when I gained weight I hated it, and so I had this rebound, backwards and forwards, backwards and forwards.



Figure 14: *Rebound* (Lewie)

Gina's *bulimia* ceased when, having settled in New Zealand and gained employment with a pharmaceutical company, she met and married 'M', and thus found herself in a stable and loving relationship with a man who, in being "tolerant and gentle and kind,

and actually quite feminine I guess”, allowed Gina to reconstruct and maintain (a identity/concept of) herself as an active, intellectual self or person. This self was again threatened, however, with the births of her (4) children, and Gina’s withdrawal from the public sphere into full-time mothering; a withdrawal that plunged her into what, on reflection, she recognized as post-natal *depression* involving a feeling of numbed detachment and, initially, a deep resentment towards and separation from her children:

It was a very tough time...and then I ended up pregnant with my third child....and so life was a blur really. I look back and I think I suffered some post-natal depression but was undiagnosed, and these dark clouds of gloom, you know, and then I got, deeply resentful, that my husband was going out to work and I was staying home looking after these monsters, and, you know, I was in a sort of robotic state.... that depression, that dark cloud of just darkness really, I blamed the children for that....I mean it was just this sense of hopelessness, this sense of no, um, future.

Gina relates this sense of hopelessness and lack of a future to a feeling of complete loss of her (real) self as a person, as her socially reconstructed self again disintegrated, and she became defined only in relation to her husband and children - as a struggling, resentful, robotic wife and mother:

I was lost...completely, I mean, as a person....I didn’t know what I wanted, I didn’t know why I wanted anything, I don’t think I wanted anything, I think I was just, in a sense of numbness really

*Could you....call it a loss of connection to the self that you had been before?*

I don’t know, I think who I’d been before was socially constructed, and so to lose that wasn’t actually a problem, because, I guess...I was probably hoping to find myself through children ....I don’t know if I’d found myself to lose it, I don’t know if I’d ever had it, and maybe the sense of the dark cloud was having never had it.... I’d never been seen as self....I had always, had to do what other people wanted me to do.

Although anti-religious, it was through reading *A Course in Miracles*<sup>81</sup> that Gina ultimately did develop a sense of her self as a spiritual being that, disentangled from social expectations, constraints, and her own resentments, “just learnt to be, and just to accept”, and thus to live and experience life without judgement. With her family returning to Britain for a year, Gina re-entered the public workforce, only to realize that, while perhaps necessary, the feminist drive for equality was also denying her what she most desired: the enjoyment of mothering her own children. Back in New Zealand, Gina therefore returned to fulltime mothering, seeking to re-establish the bonds with her children by home-

---

<sup>81</sup>*A Course in Miracles* was written by Helen Schucman (1975), who claimed that it had been dictated to her by Jesus. The miracles are based on *forgiveness*, as the change of mind that makes love possible.

schooling them for six years, until, fearing that she may become an “empty shell”, Gina sought to nourish the self within by redirecting her life away from motherhood and toward academic study. In this way, Gina reconceived, reconstructed and experienced her self as a spiritual and intellectual mind existing predominantly within her head, her *asexual* body now simply a ‘vehicle’ on which to transport that head/mind:

Well [my body] is a vehicle with which to get my mind around...I mean it carries my mind  
*Could it be a trolley that you put your head on?*  
Yeah (laughter)...yeah, could be  
*But....do your sexual parts as female parts....shape you as a mind?*  
No... I don't, maybe I... (sigh) they have shaped me as a mind because they have given me the experiences that I've had, in raising four children, and being a friend of 'M', right, but I wouldn't say, um, I mean I guess I still disconnect it, \*even now, I disconnect sexuality from who I am\*.

For Gina, then, her good, acceptable self was an asexual, spiritual mind/intellect and body disconnected from sexual female parts that she had so *thoroughly* learnt to perceive as smutty, naughty, shameful and bad that when, as a 32-year-old happily married woman, Gina first became pregnant, she couldn't tell her mother:

I daren't tell my mother, because, to tell my mother would've been to have admitted that I'd had sex, and I couldn't, I was frightened to tell her, and I was married, and thirty-two years old, and I daren't tell her. Now that's dysfunctional, but that's because I didn't want her disapproval for having sex

Thus, both Gina and Lewie sought to hide or otherwise escape from their (bad) sexual female self/body in order to construct and maintain a socially, spiritually or self-approved identity as a good (subjective) self, an escape that both agreed could therefore be seen as a means of *survival*. But for Gina, now in her fifties, the maintenance of this good, stable, recognized, loved spiritual/intellectual self has also brought feelings of loss and nostalgia for the sensual, submissively feminine (potentially bad) aspects of her self, sacrificed in order to attain, maintain, and protect its existence. Similar strategies of reformation, protection and survival of the real (bad, fragmented) sexual female self were also employed by Gorgie and her daughter Sunshine.

For Gorgie, the realization that her father and brothers were now seeing her pubertal female self as different from, inferior to, and weaker than themselves, resulting in her exclusion from their sport- and game-playing, and the sudden need to focus on her

appearance, meant the even more shocking realization that Gorgie could no longer be, and be seen and loved unconditionally for, who she was. Instead, she would now have to remodel herself to meet paternal ideals and expectations of appearance and achievement if she was to be, and be recognized and loved by him as, a *good* girl; expectations requiring that she groom herself, be femininely attractive to boys, be a mother to her brothers, and play (and succeed at) girlish sports such as tennis, rather than the more important cricket and rugby she had always (and equally) played with her brothers:

Yeah, you couldn't play with them....so I had to go off 'n play tennis, ok, so it was sort of like I was separated from them...so I took up tennis....I felt incredibly separated, you know like, the seriousness was the rugby 'n cricket, and 'now you go off 'n do what you need to do'.

However, the incestuous abuse that Gorgie had endured since the age of nine (and of which she knew her stepmother was aware), meant that she could feel only a shame, guilt and fear of exposure that led to a splitting and withdrawal of her real (sexual) self and a fragmenting, hiding and numbing of the sexual female body that she had come to see as dirty and bad.



Figure 15:

(Kayla)

This, along with the growing awareness of her boyishly androgynous appearance, meant that, for Gorgie, shapely feminine attractiveness was an ideal that she simply could *not* attain:

I distinctly remember, not feeling comfortable in my developing body, I just didn't, I didn't know how to...I didn't like it...I felt incredibly uncomfortable growing up as a woman, growing up as a maturing...turning into a woman...I certainly didn't like showing my breasts around my brothers

you're getting a sort of a picture of what everyone considers is beautiful, and you'd think 'well I'm not like that', and then you're starting to think 'well if they're beautiful, what am I?', and then you're starting to develop a picture of yourself through other people's eyes, of your inadequacies.

The ideally reconstructed self that Gorgie hoped to present to her father would therefore be based not on appearance, but on the achievements of the fit and talented *sporty* self that Gorgie had always loved, and that had always made her feel good about her self. If she couldn't be beautiful in the eyes of her father and others, then at least she could show her prowess on the tennis court and sports-field. And if Gorgie could assume the identity of the good 'athlete', then she did not need to see or acknowledge her sexual female self/body. As she put it, "I just saw myself as, an athlete...ok, so I didn't have to be a woman, I didn't have to be a man, I could be an athlete".

But when Gorgie actually entered the sporting arena, she found that the growing sense of guilt, shame, secrecy, and thus isolation felt around her secreted sexual female self and body, together with the fear of failure and consequent loss of approval and love, eroded confidence in her sporting abilities: "I lost my confidence in my own ability, I didn't want to be noticed anymore ....I didn't like getting out there and being in front of people anymore". Thus, this fear-fuelled loss of confidence self-fulfillingly resulted in Gorgie's actual failure to perform, bringing the devastating realization that she could not meet her father's expectations, whether of form or performance:

Our relationship had changed...it went from being one where I just knew he loved me for who I was, to one where I had to earn it, and I always felt I was disappointing him...I remember when I lost a tennis match, and I could see his disappointment, 'n I thought 'Dad can't you see my dungery ol' racquet?', and 'look at my crappy ol' shoes'...but it was like he couldn't see it, all he saw was that I was failing him...at sport, at school, my looks...'n I couldn't tell him what was happening to me [K's abuse], or how it was affecting me...all I



knew was 'Dad, I can't be who you want me to be anymore' ...it was like all my dreams had gone.

Unable to re-imagine or re-present her self in the pleasing, sexually attractive but also 'lady-like' form and manner expected of her, Gorgie became awkward and self-conscious about her appearance and movements in a way that completely undermined her sporting abilities and identity, thereby producing a total loss of connection to her real (sexual) self, and a failure and disintegration of the reconstructed (sporty) self:

I didn't feel comfortable with who I, I'd lost who I was, I'd lost feeling good about myself, and no one came in my life to make me feel good about myself....my body all of a sudden became, it didn't matter how successful you were....you were being judged on how you appeared, and I didn't know how to appear anymore.... even on the sports field, I didn't want to be noticed....I became awkward and self-conscious....incredible really, it was like I sabotaged myself all the time.

Aware that it was her imperfect, shamefully and guiltily sexual female body that had brought the loss of and inability to regain (the recognition/love of) not only her *real*, whole self, but also her *reconstructed* self, the teenage Gorgie turned within, resorting to two self-reconstructive strategies that, on reflection, she saw as means of protection and survival. Firstly, Gorgie created for herself a story or a fantasy world of perfection, into which she could retreat at bedtime, and particularly if weighed down with problems. In this perfect world, Gorgie assumed what she saw as the perfect form: that of a boy, who was always going on adventures, and, though he might make mistakes, remained perfect to, and loved and forgiven by, his perfect mother:

If I had troubles, like if I had an upsetting day, for example, and then I thought, I can't sleep, so I knew....that I could put myself into a story. So things that were pleasant...like I'd see something, even the Sound of Music or, the Partridge Family (laughter)...all these sort of things....I'd think that was perfect

*The perfect family? ...the perfect mother --*

-- No, the perfect mother...ok, the perfect mother. So that could be, I would be the person being nurtured by the perfect mother....and so that, was the perfect story, for me. But I was always, like I said, a boy...ok, so....if I could put myself in that story, and have wonderful adventures....I could go to sleep, and that would stop me from thinking negative thoughts

*do you think you did want to be a boy?...or --*

-- No, I just....I knew who I really was, I was a woman, or a, a girl, I was a teenage...I knew really what I was, it's just that, I felt...that wasn't perfect, I wasn't the sort of...the ideal....as a boy, I was perfect...so if I did something wrong, I was still me...I still existed...but as a girl, or a woman, I felt that if I did something wrong, \*I wouldn't be me anymore...wouldn't exist\*.

Gorgie held on to this fantasy of the perfect form and existence throughout her adult years. And so, despite marriage at twenty, the birth of three children, divorce after twenty-two years, and then setting out to find her self and explore an up until then unrecognized attraction to women, she continued to inwardly imagine her subjective self as the active, adventurous ten-year-old boy who, no matter what he did, knew that - being male, and therefore 'perfect' - he would always exist within the recognition and love of his mother:

You're starting to doubt yourself, you know, you're doubting your future, you're doubting everything, where do you fit?...as *Sal Mineo*, you didn't enter this different part of your life, you stayed...it was *Peter Pan*, you don't want to grow up...that's what it was.

Gorgie's other self-reconstructive strategy of survival, initiated when - at seventeen and at her stepmother's behest - Gorgie was forced to move away from her family and into a small, solitary flat, was to enter a phase of *orthorexia*. Having lost her father's recognition and love, and feeling alienated from her brothers, Gorgie developed a fanatical desire to eat only the most tasteless and disgusting 'health' foods, perceived as a means of keeping her self and body safe and well. In retrospect, however, Gorgie further related her orthorexic behaviour to having come to see her failed, rejected self as unattractive and unlikeable, and therefore having to be sexual to be liked and accepted, even though to do so left her feeling dirty, bad, and unable to face the boy again.



Figure 16:

(Kayla)

Living alone and now able to control what she ate, food became the means with which to cleanse, purify, protect, and thus make ‘good’ again Gorgie’s bad sexual self; the self that, deep down, she liked and wanted to survive:

[Being] sexual with men...was being something I didn’t really want to be, but I didn’t know you could be anything else. I didn’t want to go through life on my own, I didn’t see any alternatives, and so I had to be what I felt terribly uncomfortable being. But one thing I could be, was very protective of what I ate...it was like, this is what I can do...I can only eat what I feel is good for you....it was like I could feel good about my body because I’m eating well

I was so fanatical about it, and I mean I was fanatical, that I ate food, that was bloody ^horrible...like wheatgerm and, and soaked soy beans overnight, and put them in my ^porridge, and they tasted ^hideous.... but the pleasure was the fact that I was, a bit like a martyr or something...I’m eating something, it doesn’t taste very nice.... tell me what health food’s nice...it’s like ‘gulp...ahhh’, you know, but I’ve had it...and that’s how I lived... ‘ughhh, I’ve had it’.

Health food, then, was the “yucky” medicine that would cleanse, purify, redeem, and thus sustain Gorgie’s real (but bad, sexual) self. Even tasty “junk” foods became a path to redemption, by serving as a means to punish, reward, and thus control, the sexually uncontrolled self. For, in her own secret, martyrish rituals, Gorgie would punitively deny her self one treat, only to later reward it with another, thereby making the bad self good, and thus ensuring its survival:

I’d completely bar myself from potato chips or something like that, no way, no potato chips. But I’d say, oh you know, ‘it’s alright to have a bit of chocolate though’...so you’re giving yourself pleasure in other ways...like you control, and then you give yourself pleasure

Well, it was a way of saying ‘hey, I do deep down love my body...I want to love my body, but no one else knows...it’s my ^secret...and I’m going to look after my body, and I’m not goin’ to get sick, ‘cause I do love my body, ‘cause I love what it does on the sports field, I love it.

Even after Gorgie sought and found a measure of safety and security within marriage and motherhood, with the identities of good, successful and independent ‘wife’, ‘mother’ and ‘sportswoman’ creating a socially acceptable (and for Gorgie, an asexual) form and concept of her (subjective) self, these secret strategies for survival of the real, secreted self continued. For the price paid for the ‘safe’ identity and existence of her socially reconstructed self was marital sex and the consequent feelings of dislike, badness, secrecy and shame; a price that Gorgie paid only with the assistance of her perfect story, and ongoing orthorexic rituals of cleansing, control, punishment and purification:

Being sexual was, like **you** always felt that **you** weren't supposed to be doing it, you know, there was nothing open or joyful about it

*So, it was a necessity?*

It was a necessity, yeah, it was thinking, I really like this person, he's a guy, and to keep him, I'm going to have to be sexual, it's as simple as that. So....that's how our relationship was ... that I have to be sexual to keep him.

Being sexual also resulted in the birth of Gorgie's first child, her daughter *Sunshine*, and in finally feeling her numbed self bond with Sunshine, Gorgie felt the pure mother/child love that she remembered from earliest childhood, and had since experienced only within her perfect story. As Sunshine grew, however, Gorgie found herself imposing the same feminine ideals (of appearance and sporting achievement) onto her daughter that she herself had wanted so desperately to fulfil:

I could lose myself in her, totally....like the attention came onto Sunshine....and so life became very easy...I no longer had to worry about myself....totally obsessed with her development, and how she's gonna be, I'd love her like I wanted to be loved....and for her to be who I could never be....she was going to be a beautiful sportswoman off 'n on the field...she was going to be great at sport and she was going to be so confident off the field, and she was going to be loved by everybody, 'cause everybody's going to see who she is ....I wanted her to show her body, I wanted her to feel good about her body.

With the birth of her two boys, Gorgie threw herself into the role and identity of the perfect sporting mother, and as the need and willingness to give up her body for sex lessened, so did her orthorexic fanaticism, though the need to eat in a healthy and restrained way, and thus, a feeling of guilt in consuming what was 'bad' for her, still persists. And although Sunshine *was* beautiful, and *did* excel at sport, as an adolescent she learned from her father/coach that she could never be good enough to win and keep his love and approval; whilst from her mother, she learned that, no matter how close they'd once been, anything to do with the sexual female body and sexuality was to remain unseen and unspoken. Thus, when Sunshine turned to boys for love, affection, and approval, her active, exuberant feminine self was violated and shattered, as Gorgie's had been:

She would've picked up the fact of the silence...but also picked up my look of saying 'Sunshine, you look good, you look beautiful...you look desirable'....You'll be picked up, but be in control of it, don't let anyone take it from you...but someone did take it off her obviously...I don't know, she's never told me her story, but something terrible happened.... someone took, and destroyed...what she thought that she could show, and no one would harm her...I should've given her the warning signs, I never told her, because I was reluctant to talk about it.

It was only when Gorgie's husband ended their marriage, thereby shattering her seemingly safe, secure identity as wife and mother that Gorgie set out to find, or release from within, her real self. Having, since her teens, remained alienated from and blind to that sexual female self/body, it was through developing loving friendships with women, and later venturing into two lesbian relationships, that Gorgie was able to begin acknowledging, exploring, and expressing her own previously suppressed, numbed desires, feelings, thoughts and sensations from within a mind and body that she is learning to once again experience as wholly integrated, sensually female, and able to freely give and receive unconditional love:

Yeah, you keep hold of something of yourself, that one day you hope that you'll be able to restore...because you can't completely lose yourself, otherwise you're completely...you'd never be able to come back Jane, and that's madness, when you can never come back. So you kinda hold on to something, and that's why I've come back, because I've actually held on to that sporty person.

I wanted to be a, a woman, be feminine, and play sport and be a sensual being...which I didn't even know what that was, but that was me, I wanted to be loved and admired for who I was.

It was in beginning to rediscover, be, express, and therefore be seen and loved (by her current partner) for who she was - an active, thoughtful, sensual, sexual woman who was always already perfect - that Gorgie was finally able to relinquish her fantasy of being the perfect (boy) child. As she put it, "I got to a point where I could drop that, you know, and then I could just, be me".

In a final interview with Gorgie, around three years after the first,<sup>82</sup> she described the changes in her self (-concept) over that time as follows:

Well, I'm not in front of myself, protecting myself anymore...I'm not putting...this thing in front of me, which was me, ok...you're only going to know so much, I'm going to stand back, you know...I'm actually behind myself now

*Behind yourself?*

Yeah my body's in front of me. I'm...basically I'm looking [out] from myself...that's the huge difference - that I can feel that it's me...it's me out there...the thing that I didn't want people to look at, is what I want them to look at now, is my face, ok...that's what I want people to look at, I want people to look at my eyes, I want people to look into me now

---

<sup>82</sup>The time lapse between interviews was because Gorgie was first interviewed for a social science research project (on the same topic) conducted in 2007 under Dr John Patterson (UoW), that interview then becoming the basis for the later interviews with Gorgie as a participant in the current research.

What I am saying is that, if we all lined up in a cardboard box naked, I would say that I'm a good person... 'look at me, I'm a good person, you know, I really...I'm worth a chance'.

What has also changed during that time is Gorgie's relationship to her daughter Sunshine.

For Sunshine, the pubertal fragmentation and social alienation of her previously whole, active, intelligent, sporty child self - firstly, through a withdrawal of affection and approval from her father, and a loss of school friendships through several relocations, and secondly, through the later awareness that anything to do with her sexual female self/body was taboo - brought the realization that she must now strive to be and re-present her self as a good person to gain the recognition and love of parents and peers. Like her mother before her, it was the sporty aspect of her real self that Sunshine retained, and around which she constructed an adolescent persona or identity as an active, talented, successful subjective self that would hopefully meet her parents' sporting ideals and expectations, particularly those of her father coach. For as Sunshine quickly learnt, the consequences of *not* meeting his expectations were criticism and public humiliation:

I was really hard on myself, and I wanted to always win, but Dad was horrible...he was the most, I think 'cause he tried to overcompensate 'cause I was his daughter that he was the toughest on me, and he...made me cry...yeah...he made me cry, and I ^think he did the same to Mum...he was real harsh on like Mum when she played sport...maybe he strived for perfection and could see the ability in us to be better, but when you're around your peers...

Now needing to excel in the game she loved in order to avoid punishment and humiliation, Sunshine developed a fear of making mistakes and failing that inevitably led to failure, loss of enjoyment, and the feeling that she would never be good enough to attain her father's love, a feeling that continued into adulthood;

I'd become so competitive, I hated making errors in my self, and that's from Dad. I'd get real hacked off if I'd made a mistake and I sort of forgot the enjoyment of it for a long time.... [my brother] used to come and watch sport, and, he would hide, because he was scared of me making a mistake, and he was scared that Dad would yell at me....And he wouldn't just yell ...he would scream.... I'm never going to win probably in Dad's eyes, I'm always going to be ...I dunno whether this is an excuse, I lost the enjoyment of it, and it just becomes hard work.

With loss of hope of regaining her father's (intersubjective) recognition, love and approval, and feeling alienated from her team-mates, Sunshine's sporting persona collapsed. No

longer knowing who she was, whom she wanted to please, or how to please them, she turned from parents to peers and set about (re)building a recognized, approved social identity based not on sporting ability or achievements, but on her sexual attractiveness and ability to socialize:

You're trying so hard to be good, and never quite sort of there, and in the end, I was like ...maybe that's what hurt Dad the most, was that I had stopped playing volleyball...he had all these big dreams for me, and I said no

[Mum and I] were good sportswomen...and yet you look at it and think, we never both carried it through, Mum had children, I stopped playing...and I started drinking and socializing and it was like, you know what? I have done this my whole life...pretending to be... winning...and all it does is not bring very much happiness at the moment anyway.

For Sunshine, this social and sexual persona meant a further reason for secrecy and (both psychic and physical) separation from her mother Gorgie, due to the latter's inability to acknowledge even her own sexual body, let alone Sunshine's.<sup>83</sup> Sunshine's naivety about the possible consequences of being (seen as) an attractive, sexually desirable young woman, along with her desire to be liked, loved and given the affection she craved, resulted in an act of sexual violation, that, as stated earlier, brought a shattering of the social persona, a withdrawal and loss of self, and a conceptual and perceptual "splitting" of the head/mind from sexually defiled, fragmented body. As Gorgie described the psychic and visible effects of this experience:

Sun became terribly withdrawn...became incredibly withdrawn...I didn't recognize her. When I picked her up at the airport, I never recognized my child. I thought 'who is this person' you know, she was shaking, her hands were like that (shakes)...she was like a punk rocker...and smoking, and she stayed in bed, 'n wouldn't get out of bed... 'n she was just a complete, shell...of this vibrant, beautiful girl that went off, with a crew-cut, she went this healthy, strong, beautiful girl.

Her real and social selves shattered, and her self-controlled, sexual body taken and reduced to a headless, mindless object/hole of defilement, Sunshine returned home and subsequently entered a phase of fanatical exercise and restrained eating that developed, in her early twenties, into what she recognized then, and in the interview, as *anorexia*.

---

<sup>83</sup> See pages 174 and 211 for accounts of the rift that occurred between Gorgie and Sunshine due to the unspoken communication from mother to daughter that the sexual female body and sexuality was dirty, shameful, bad, and thus, to be kept hidden, and always under one's control.





Yeah...yeah...that's when it became an isolation, trying to separate and control, because beforehand it was a mental thing. It was trying to like...I was worried about someone else and not being good enough...trying to please your parents

Well [Mum] used [food] as a way to purify, I used it as a form of, something you can control...with food... you could control your intake...like I'd say 'oh my gosh I only had this today', and I could remember what I ate...it was like, control.

For Sunshine, the anorexic control of mind and body had several characteristics that separated and distinguished it from the parentally/socially directed control over her self and its performance and appearance, and thus, the recognition, love and approval from others that she'd pursued in adolescence. Firstly, Sunshine's anorexic pursuit of control occurred as a consequence of her not only failing to attain paternal/parental recognition and approval, but also then *walking away* from that pursuit:

I think I gave up on my parents' approval though...Dad was by this stage pretty much overseas...I remember going over to South Africa for my 20th birthday, and, it was almost like he'd forgotten and didn't want to talk about the past.

Secondly, the control of the self/body imposed through the restraint and denial of eating was perceived and experienced as a 'battle' *within* and *with* her self/body, in which the conscious self or 'I' must constantly strive to make the 'bad' self/body good:

There's no outside factors, you're doing the whole thing, there's no extran...outside forces, you're in your own little bubble

*Would you say that, all the outside forces....you talked about seeing yourself through other people's eyes...do you think that's a way of pushing that [away] --*

-- Yeah...well in a way, it was just me, and the control of not eating....The battle is that I'm in control of whether I eat or not...I'm in the battle with myself, between myself and... myself!....that's what it feels like, so it's like, 'you're not going to eat'.

Thirdly, in this internal battle for purified goodness, the controlling (subjective) self set her own standards by which to measure the attainment (or not) of goodness by the bad sexual self, and was therefore no longer aspiring to paternal/social ideals of goodness or perfection of form (e.g. slender sexual attractiveness, beauty, compliance, ability, etc.):

Yeah, it's funny how...instead of [thinking] 'I'm a bad girl for losing...for being way underweight'...you'd think that'd be terrible for me, but no...you feel good, you feel clean, you feel....Yes, it's like you feel sort of exalt...exalted?...and I'm horrified if I've put on like a kilogram...I feel down, I feel fat, I feel bloated, I feel dirty and ^depressed

*Yes...dirty and depressed is the bad girl. So, would you say then, when you say 'I'm in*

*control, I've won the battle', it's the battle between your bad and your good self?*

Yes

*And you've taken control, no one else can say whether you're bad or good anymore?*

Yeah, that's it, because it's like the battle is between myself...not between anyone else...I don't need any outside forces...to control, or to please...I'm pleasing myself by losing the weight.

Sunshine's own standard of goodness was the ability to attain and exhibit a daily measure of control, purification, and self-denial through the ritualized monitoring and regulation of food intake, the constant loss of weight, an often-punishing exercise regime, and internal cleansing through laxative-use. And her success in meeting these standards of goodness or perfection was evidenced and measured by the *amount* of weight and size lost each day, and thus, the degree of protrusion of ribs or other bones:

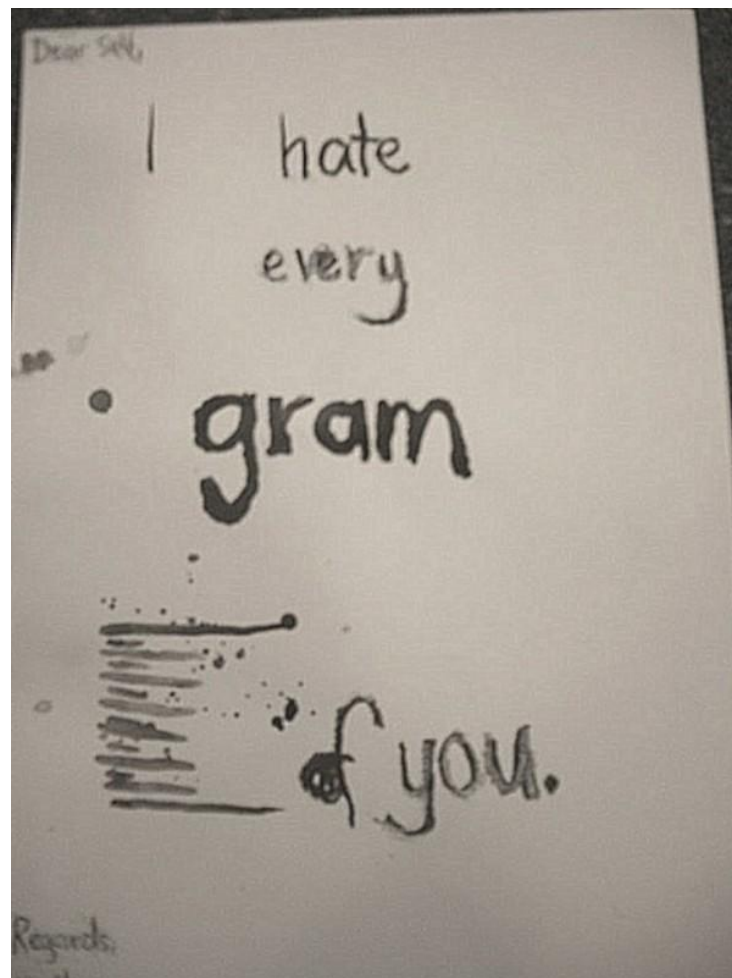


Figure 18:

(Kayla)

It's sort of like, you become quite detached...like I wouldn't look at my face...I'd look at

the bones, sticking out...I'd look at the collar bone, but I never looked at, like anything  
^personal --  
-- *You didn't look yourself in the eye?*  
No, but I'd look at my ribs, and then I'd look at --  
-- *For a sign of success?*  
Yeah, but I'd never look at my face.

The fourth difference, then, between Sunshine's anorexic battle and the preceding pursuit of parentally or socially imposed ideals of feminine form/function was that the anorexic standards and perceptual evidence of goodness did not focus on the face or its appearance. Rather, in reflecting and reacting to the violation-based separation of head/person from fragmented, defiled sexual body that Sunshine had experienced (and to which she found analogy in *The Handmaid's Tale*), the anorexic standards and search for evidence of control, purification, punishment, and goodness focused only on the body and (erasure of) its bad sexual and other parts:

[In *The Handmaid's Tale*], when they have sex...you don't see the face, so it doesn't become personal...so it's all detached, like the body's split...and it's purely just to reproduce  
[So] *it's totally about the sexual objectification of a woman, and the idea that you are no longer a person...*  
Yeah  
*And is that how you would've felt?*  
Yeah...you don't...it was...strange

*And, if I do this to my body...this is what you've made my body, if I do this to it, if I erase or remove the sexual bits, I won't be that any more?*  
Yeah...yeah...*anorexia's* a form of self-mutilation...it was the ribs...the body was important ...my face just wasn't important to me...it became, I guess, too personal, I didn't want to look at myself in the eye, because I think deep down I probably knew I was doing something wrong with controlling myself... it was like you just looked at everything else, just to get that detached ...\*yes!\*...the bone...it was almost like a detached feeling.

By looking only at the body and its mutilated, erased sexual parts and protruding bony parts, and not at the face or the person behind it, the controlling self obtained visual evidence of a fragmented detachment of 'bad' sexual female body from 'good' head/self, and of 'bad' impurely sexual, fleshy, bloody parts from 'good' desexualized, cleansed, purified, bony parts.

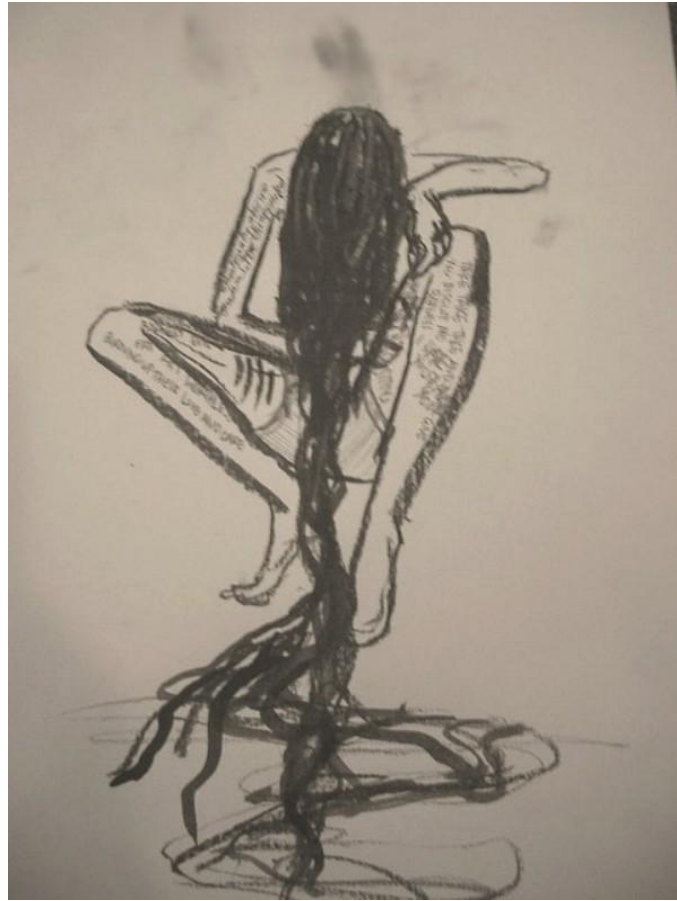


Figure 19:

(Kayla)

Fifthly, this internal battle for goodness and self-approval - through achievement of the ideal form - was *constant* and *ongoing*; goodness could never be finally attained and kept, but was, with each new day, to be pursued and won anew:

I think when you look in the mirror, you don't see what other people see...you still see like that ideal thing that you wanna see, it's that battle that you're winning, and so you still see your self, like you can understand, but you're still seeing your self

*So could you say, you can never be good enough?*

No...that's why you control your food, you've got to constantly do that to be winning, you can't just say stop, or what are you fighting for, you know, what do you do, it's like you're blocked...it's your fault

*If you can never escape that image of the bad girl, then you can never stop, because then you will be the bad girl, is that what you're saying?*

Yeah, and that's the whole point with this battle...is that you constantly want to be better, so it's like you're purifying, it's like you're keeping in control, and you want to forget about everything else, and you've got this control of what's happening and then you stop...and it's like, then that bad girl's come back.

Sixthly, in contrast to the recognition and praise received for the extreme pursuit of parental/social ideals, if the anorexic control and purification of the bad sexual body went

too far, and too much weight, size and strength lost, then Sunshine began to perceive her reformed self and body as visibly *out* of control, ill, and therefore as ‘dirty’ to others:

It was like there was an equilibrium, a point when I was in control, in control of my weight, and I could control what I ate, but if I got too thin, it was like I was out of control...cos I’d start getting flushes and dizzy spells, and it was like I was losing control....suddenly you come back really dangerously thin, and it’s like ‘oh my god no...I don’t want to know’ ...you’ve suddenly become dirty to them.

Seventhly, Sunshine retrospectively understood her *anorexia* as expressing a sense of loss of, and a deep desire to become again, the whole, self-knowing, self-directed, unconditionally loved *child* that she once was, and to thus experience again the simplicity of that life, as opposed to the fragmentation, confusion, alienation, and trauma of her teenage years:

there were so many things going on with sport 'n volleyball 'n friends 'n parents...I became so lost, it was trying to...like I was out of control in so many different ways

*Does that make any sense to you, the idea that (anorexia) is a way of going back to who you were as a child, when you could just be who you were and be loved for it?*

Yeah...I’d agree with that. I’d say it was definitely a way of me...definitely, simplifying things...to me, the control of food meant you didn’t have to think about other things, you know, you thought about just the things you wanted to think about, like food...you had more control of yourself

I think I spent my whole life in my twenties trying to get that feeling back of when I was 5 or 6, that same sense of...and it’s not there, 'cause it’s never going to be there.

And lastly, for Sunshine, the anorexic battle to be the controlled, desexualized, purified, reformed child again was, in effect, a battle for the *survival* of the real self. For, to give up the battle would have meant a loss of hope of ever being good enough to subjectively exist and thus be recognized, known, and loved again. And in this case, the *real* may be preferable to the *living* death of the self:

Well, it keeps your sanity...like, I have no idea what I’m doing in life, but in this small aspect, I can, and it ended up being a huge thing though, because suddenly it affects other things because I wanted to be thin, and so I was managing the effects of it, and so it became the whole part of who I was

*The girls that die from anorexia, would you agree that you could see it as a total loss of hope?*

Yeah...they can never get there, yeah...Your body just gives out...your body can’t cope... it’s not just the physical, I think it’s the mental. Your body just can’t cope with the failure

of never going to be...it's like the mind gives up, the body gives up, cos it's all connected, that's what I believe. Like, everything's a living entity, and if your mind, and your heart... it's not just a beating thing, it also controls, what you don't...if you have this realization that you're never going to get there, no matter how much you try and be in control of it; you try and be good, but you're never going to be good enough, then your whole body will just...

*So in a way, it was a survival mechanism, to say, 'I can't achieve what you want me to do; I can't be who you want me to be, I'm tired of trying...but I want to be good, I want to like myself, I want somewhere that I can exist and be happy with who I am*  
Yeah...yeah...and that's it.

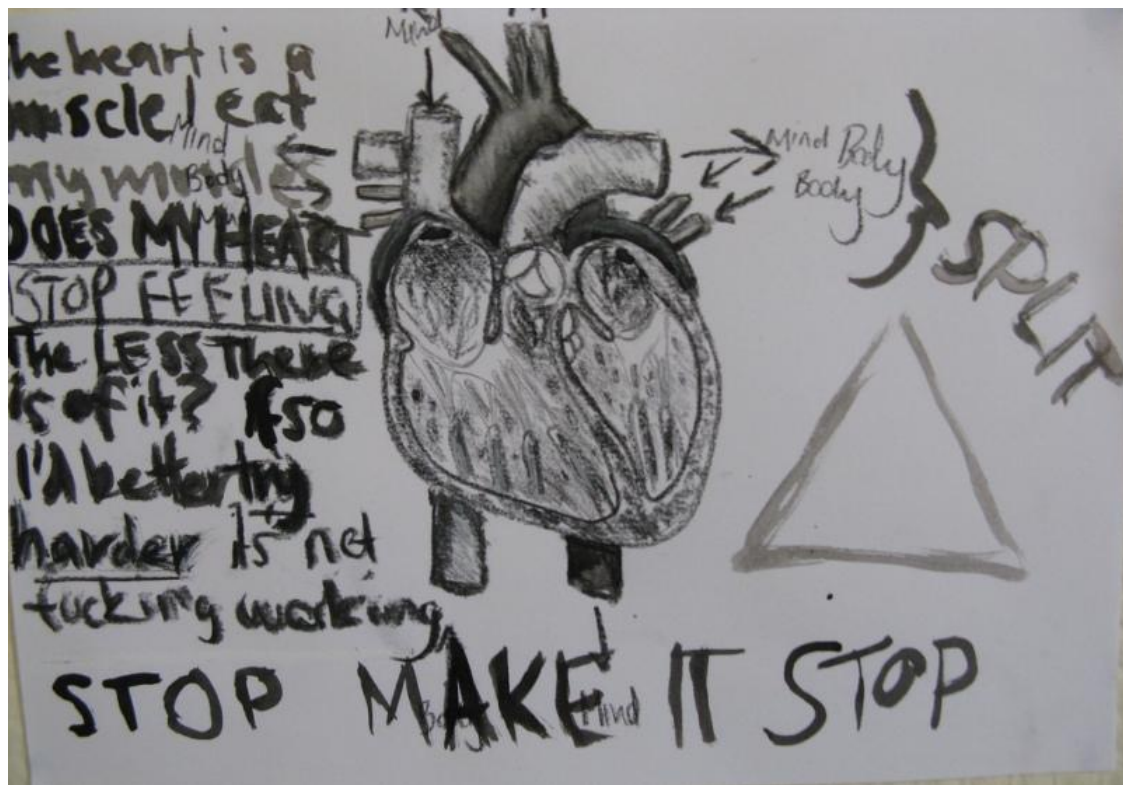


Figure 20:

(Kayla)

Her originally whole subjective female self reduced to little more than a bundle of dirty, bad, used and abused sexual parts, Sunshine found in *anorexia* the hope and means of redeeming and re-forming that self by purifying, punishing, and ultimately erasing those sexual female parts, and reconstructing herself as a once again whole, asexual, childlike *person* who, in being 'good enough' to earn a measure of self-recognition, -love and -approval, sustained her own existence.

Although Gorgie encouraged Sunshine into a return to volleyball playing and sports coaching, her physical weakness, loss of spirit, and lingering fear of failure meant that she could not, or lacked the will to, pursue or achieve success. This realization, along with the

sense of alienation from her father, and the ongoing inability of Gorgie and Sunshine to be, express and connect as real, sexual, womanly selves meant that Sunshine sought safety and security in relationships with men who might give her a stable social identity and a sense of her self as loved and protected. Travelling the world with her boyfriend 'S', and needing an income, Sunshine put to use her (hetero)sexual attractiveness and desirability by working as a stripper in a high-class Japanese night-club. Protected by bouncers and paid well to perform, Sunshine found here what she had always yearned for - friendship and camaraderie with the other women. And, while admitting she would not have done this work in New Zealand, Sunshine enjoyed a sense of control over her own feminine body and life, and a power over the male customers that gave her a (albeit temporary and imitative) measure of boyishly subjectified identity and existence:

It was like...power...these men desire you, you get naked, no one knows you...I would never dream of doing this in New Zealand. 'S' thought it was the sexiest thing in the whole world, so I was in control of the relationship...I was in control of the money...I was in control of everything...the men in the club....And I took on a...a fake name...pseudonym...of 'Taylor' ...well it's quite funny, it's a boy's name, that I'd taken on....You could say we were taken advantage of, but...It was like, for once we're doing what they do to us...we're taking money off them, we're taking the piss, they think we like them, we don't; it was like a whole big sexual switch.

But the price of this socially reconstructed identity and sense of power was the ongoing sexual objectification of her own real self/body, and the use of that body to try to find what Sunshine really wanted - the safety, security and stability of a loving, affectionate relationship with someone who would see, know, and love her for who she really was.

It was not until she married 'C', and gave birth to her two children, that Sunshine found a secure and loving place within which to begin reconstructing her self - as wife, mother and daughter - in a way that might assist the emergence of the real whole, free-spirited, connected self of her childhood. But what persisted through this reconstruction was the sense of her sexual female self and body as bad and imperfect, and thus the inability to reconceive herself as a perfectly whole, integrated, sexual female being, rather than a number of more or less imperfect parts:

I don't really often look at my face in the mirror...but when I look in the mirror and I'm looking at my face, I'll see the grey hair, or I'll see my wrinkles there, and I'll see all my faults....Yeah, I'll isolate...but I already know that there's something wrong with them, like I already know that there's a frown, so I'll look there...but I won't actually look at

any of the good things...like I won't look at my eyes

'C' wants me to get [boobs].... it's like the boobs will take away all the other things, like I'm getting older, all the other bad, what I deem the bad things. It's like, ok, this is something that I could be alright, to gain that confidence back.

Along with this persisting fragmentation and isolation of self and body came the continuing need to constantly and guiltily monitor and restrain her eating to a degree that was not a return to *anorexia*, but that permitted Sunshine a feeling of control over, and goodness of, her real self when she felt unable to control the actions, expectations and responses of others, and thus, a sense of sustaining the inner self just in case of a loss of her socially reconstructed self/identities:

It's like what am I going to become?...I just become a Mum...but again I lose who I am

*But if you weren't the mother, what would you be?*

Oh god, no, no one

*It's almost like you wouldn't exist anymore?*

No... so that's why constantly still... like, I mean, I'll eat, but I feel guilty after I eat. Like, ...'T' and I sat in bed and we shared an avocado sandwich. I felt so guilty for having it....

Like, you have no control of other aspects, but this is the little thing that...it's just me; it's just who I am. It's like trying to find me battling with myself, with eating.

In the nine months since the interviews with Sunshine, her mother Gorgie has spoken of experiencing a feeling of “coming to recognize her daughter again”, observing a gradual re-emergence of the vibrant and strongly moral self that she knew Sunshine to be as a child; an observation that Sunshine later reinforced in saying to me that, since the interviews, she had felt “much lighter...like a weight's been lifted”. During an interview, Sunshine also said of Gorgie that, in the last couple of years, she has seen a “light” and “life” in her mother's eyes that wasn't there before. Gorgie and Sunshine's pubertal deconstruction and reconception of their real (sexual) female self as imperfect, dirty, bad, and therefore needing to be constantly controlled, punished, purified and thus reconstructed into the perfect, lovable form was also reflected, though to a different degree, in *Miss P's* anorexic and post-anorexic experiences and recollections.

Although Miss P could not recall a time when she did not feel the weight of parental expectation that she would be, and represent her family as, perfect, as a child she was able to fulfil these expectations in a way that brought praise, love and gifts from her father, and sometimes jealousy from her mother. As Miss P put it, “I was the perfect child....I didn't



have a childhood because, in between my dancing....I reclused into my books....I had to excel at everything”. Thus, the young Miss P was able to conceal and alleviate parental conflict, and her (pharmacist) father’s chronic depression and drunken violence, by excelling at whatever she did, thereby creating and maintaining the façade of the perfect family:

That’s what I did all through my life with my family, I was always putting together the bits when there was an argument the night before, I had to try and, heal it. I remember going to school on a school bus and my best friend was ‘D’.....we were the put-togetherers, we were the make-righters.

With adolescence, however, and the failure of Miss s sexual body to grow and develop ‘normally’, came the realization that she was no longer perfect in her mother’s eyes. It was with this failure, and the sexual abuse by her eldest brother, that Miss P’s façade began to crack, as she learned to see her (sexual) female self/body as not only imperfect and uncontrollable but also ‘grubby’, and thus to be disguised, erased and overcome to regain her perfect, pleasing form:

When I was perfect, I was a child, I couldn’t do anything wrong. As I grew up, I couldn’t keep things perfect...I was out of control basically, and I couldn’t control things around me  
*So the body that you’d had as a ten year-old, which was petite and a perfect form, which was a pleasing body then became a displeasing body*  
Yeah, something wrong with me.

Her teenage years were therefore a frenetic time of striving to excel in every activity Miss P undertook, so as to recreate, identify, and regain parental/social recognition for her self as the perfectly controlled, self-disciplined daughter, actress, schoolgirl and ballerina:

I came out at the end of college and took the lead roles in the production [of the Wizard of Oz], I did the choreography, I got the scholarship to ballet school...yeah, I got joint dux of the school...’cause that was the only way I got recognition  
*So you were doing all that to get recognition, from who, your father, or society at large?*  
People in society at large.....Yeah, and my parents....I got very close to my father...very close to my father. I was a very talented dancer at that time, and I got a scholarship to Wellington, and I didn’t really want to take it up because....I took it up because it was expected of me, it was one way of making the family look good.

Having developed a very close relationship to her father (“I was more like his wife, I would’ve been what his wife should’ve been”), Miss P went away at sixteen to Ballet School, to take up the scholarship and hopefully become a prima ballerina. However,

within less than a year, and feeling that she was not gaining enough recognition, and not tall or slim enough to be an outstanding dancer, Miss P began to limit her food intake and lose weight. Around the same time, she received from her father a letter explaining that he and her mother were separating. It was these two events, perceived as resulting from her own failure and inability to remain the perfect child maintaining the perfect front, that Miss P recognized, in retrospect, as initiating what became a nine-year experience of *anorexia*. Eventually too weak to perform, and despite knowing that she would disappoint her parents, Miss P relinquished her scholarship and returned home. As she said of that time:

I've thought about this really carefully actually...I felt like I wasn't excelling at that time in my life, and I thought by getting thin, I could shine out

*In relation to your ballet, or as a separate thing?*

In relation to everything....I wasn't the perfect child....when I was at ballet school, [Dad] wrote to me and said that Mum and Dad were separating...and that's exactly when I started to stop eating

*Is that because you thought you'd let them down?*

Possibly, yeah....The fear of failing....What am I going to do, how can I fix it up?

Her parents having tried various treatments for Miss P's *anorexia*, including hypnotherapy, a stint in Ashburn Hall, and time in Ward 17 (Tauranga Hospital), Miss P's world changed traumatically when, just prior to her 18th birthday, her father followed his mother in committing suicide. Devastated at losing the person she loved most, and told that it was her *anorexia* that drove his death, Miss P remained in an anorexic state for the next eight years, living with and keeping house for her mother in the ultimately unfulfilled hope of achieving her recognition and acceptance. On reflection, then, Miss P understood her *anorexia* to have expressed a need to regain a sense of *control* over her self and the world around her, at a time when her reconstructed 'perfect' self was collapsing and thus threatening to expose her own and her family's imperfect and dysfunctional form, thereby incurring parental displeasure and rejection. Through the daily restraint of eating and use of laxatives, Miss P regained a sense of control over her self and life but also found a means by which to secretly cleanse her self/body in a way that brought feelings of inner purity and goodness, whilst also incurring her mother's disapproval:

*Anorexia* was a way of me getting out of her grip...she was no longer in control...'how could you do this to me Miss P, how could you do this? You're my only daughter'...'quite easily Mum'....Mmm...it's control

*Control, but also purifying*

Yep

*I'm no longer grubby, I'm clean?*

That's right....Well that's like, why did I take laxatives after I'd eaten?...to clean my body out 'n make myself pure. I was lucky I had a Dad who was a pharmacist, Coloxyl with Danthron, ok it's done my bowel in for my life, but, I'd go through a bottle a day, no problem, and I felt so good when I was cleansed right through.

But more than just a means of controlling and purifying the grubby, imperfect self, Miss P's *anorexia* was about wanting to regain the *perfect form* she'd had as a child. And to do this required the starving or sloughing off of her imperfect, uncontrollable sexual female self and body, to thus become the perfect little girl again:

*I'm seeing the whole thing of anorexia as, as a way of fending off--*

*-- You're safe in the little girl's shell*

*Yeah ok, holding the perfect form of the little girl*

Mmm

*And in a way you could say anorexia would be cutting off the bits, sloughing off the bits*

Mmm, so you stay young 'n little...yeah.



Figure 21:

(Kayla)

In the final interview, Miss P perceived a connection between her *anorexia* and the vivid nightmares she'd experienced since adolescence, in which her earliest memory was replayed; a memory in which six-year-old Miss P was "climbing up the jigsaw wall, and forcing the jigsaw wall to come down on top of me, and then put to bed, and having to put

all the jigsaws together”. In her nightmare, Miss P was surrounded by other people’s mess, and impossibly expected to restore order by a certain time to avert the total collapse of her self and world:

every dream I have is about everything going wrong, there’s a mess around me, I’ve got to clean it up....and always my mother in it, my Dad’s never in it, it’s always my brothers and my mother and her relations, and me having to clean up, and then having so long to do it in ...And I can’t cope, I can’t cope...this desperation, desperate feeling and I wake up and I feel ‘oh, I just want to go to sleep’.

Perceiving the jigsaw to be the façade of perfection that Miss P had been expected to put - and hold - together all her life, the nightmare expressing terror at the pubertal collapse of the jigsaw and her inability to remake it in time to save from exposure the real, imperfect self beneath, Miss P saw her *anorexia* as a turning within to create her own standards of - and means to - perfection. A retreat that was ultimately an *escape*, not only from the sexual *female* self that was the source of her imperfection, but also from the real world:

*For a girl who’s 15,16,17 and developing sexually, becoming very aware that she has....a female sexual gender, anorexia could be seen as a way of getting rid of that --*

-- Escaping it

*Did that then give you a sense of yourself as more boyish? More childish?*

Childish

*By going back to the child, you retain that perfect form?*

Untouchable form.... mmm...but you’ve still got to remain perfection...maintain your perfection

*And how are you doing that?*

Because you’re in control

*So it’s keeping up the rituals (nods)...and as long as you did that, you’re maintaining the perfect --*

-- Control....I’m in control....so if I get hurt by someone, I’ll take control of my control ....when I was anorexic, I separated from the world...I distanced myself from reality basically ....people couldn’t hurt me.

What Miss P finally realized, however, was that years of *anorexia* were ultimately not going to achieve the familialy/socially recognized goodness, and thus, the love and acceptance of others for which she longed. Along with the experience of meeting up with two men (in Ward 17) who accepted and befriended Miss P simply for who she was, and not for how she looked or what she had achieved, this realization was the impetus for a shift away from *anorexia*, followed by marriage (at 28), and the birth of her two children.

For Miss P, marriage and pregnancy promised the opportunity, as the perfect wife and expectant mother, to finally redeem her self in her mother's and wider family's eyes:

I think the happiest moments in my life [were] when I was pregnant....I just felt really good in myself, I felt like I had a glow coming out of me, it wasn't a glow that was down there, it was a glow that was coming out of me.... when I was pregnant I was doing a good thing, I was producing a child, for the family, I was doing a good thing  
*Ah, ok...that would get your parents' admiration and --*  
-- Yeah  
*So, in a way, the child was sort of saving you, or allowing you to be something you couldn't be otherwise*  
Exactly, exactly.

Despite the promise of a good, loved self and identity that she could at last keep hold of, Miss P's husband showed himself to be a wife-batterer whom she left after three years of marriage. Perceiving her self to have failed as the perfect wife and mother, thereby again failing and disappointing her mother and family, Miss P's socially reconstructed self/front began to crumble, causing a recurrent feeling of loss of control over her self and life:

There was a time when I thought I had control in my life, when I was first married and then I got pregnant.... I was the perfect form, I had two beautiful children....And then when that all fell apart, everything was out of control again, and the only way I could control my life was to, do the other part...I mean, I was on my own with two children, I used to wake up, it was nothing for me in a day to, get up get the kids organized, wash the windows, wash the car, mow the lawns, clean out the garage, do a full house-clean, get the groceries...I don't know how I did it.

Thus, instead of reverting to *anorexia* to rebuild her ('grubby', uncontrolled) self as the perfect form, Miss P turned to her home and surroundings, and the repeated, ritualized cleaning and ordering of those surroundings - in order to purify, re-form and protect that self. It was these rituals that became, and that Miss P later recognized as, a form of *obsessive-compulsive* disorder that has dominated her life since, and that she perceives to be simply a transformation of her *anorexia*, the need for standards and visible evidence of control and perfection of her inner (bad) self shifting from a ritual (desexualizing) purification and reformation of her *body*, to a ritual cleansing and reordering of her physical *surroundings*:

I often look back at my past and I think that what I've ended up into now is a side-shoot of *anorexia*....I've shifted my compulsion to something else....it's like the way I dust my house every night 'n vacuum, people laugh at that, but that's my way of feeling good within myself, that's my safety net....If things are nice 'n tidy 'n orderly and neat 'n tidy outside, I feel good

inside, if they're messy out there, then I feel grubby 'n out of control inside....And the same thing happens when your eating's out of control

*You feel grubby inside?*

Mmm....this is my way of keeping control of my life...it's the last thing I've got, that I've got control of

*Ok, and so if it's not order in that place, it's order in...*

Yes, as I said, I think what I've done is I've transferred my order from one part of my life to another....neither is any better, I mean personally I'd rather be skinny....can't stand my weight, hate being like I am....I exercise like crazy down in the garage every night.

Thus, despite reconstructing a seemingly solid, stable and socially acceptable identity or persona for herself, firstly, through a second marriage to 'K', and secondly, through her work as a carer in charge of a *dementia* ward, the enduring conception of her sexual female self/body as dirty and imperfect has demanded private rituals of control that, in making that (inner) self good again, serve as means for its protection and survival in the face of a shattering of the social self/façade.

For Miss P, the problem with these compulsive rituals is that, firstly, it is unavoidable that forces beyond her control (e.g. the weather) will occasionally prevent satisfaction of the obsessive need for control, cleanliness and order, thereby creating fear and anxiety at the prospect of exposure of the bad self to the outside world. As Miss P described it, "The minute something gets out of kilter, like I'll wake up and there's a storm outside, you ask my husband, I go...I go ape-shit, I can't handle it". And secondly, no matter how often these rituals are performed, and therefore how pure and perfect everything may appear on the outside, as Miss P said, "I still feel as miserable as shit in here". Unable to escape the maternally reinforced sense and concept of her real sexual female self as grubby, imperfect and a failure, Miss P's rituals are those of the little girl still seeking her mother's acceptance and approval:

I think my image of myself with my mother is that I'm still a little girl....I've never grown up, and never allowed myself to grow up in front of her....that would be one of my biggest wishes in life is to not feel driven by sources around me, to actually live with myself as I am, to accept myself as I am, and not what other people want me to be.

To be, know, and accept her self for who she is, would mean no longer having to wish or fearfully and compulsively strive to be the perfect form - whether in Miss P's fantasy of *Dorothy* flying over the rainbow, in her *jigsaw* nightmare, or in her anorexic and obsessive-compulsive need for control and order. But, while its *femaleness* marks that self

as imperfect, Miss P must continue the obsessive pursuit of perfection, thereby feeding her addiction to the love and approval necessary for her survival, but to be constantly won anew:

Well-balanced people don't need love and approval

*Don't you think we all need love and approval?*

Oh to a certain extent, but not to the degree of someone who is actually not given love and approval

*So you're saying that someone who is not given love and approval, it becomes--*

-- It becomes an addiction

*An addiction, yes, right, in that, your activities become a means to --*

-- Survival.

Perhaps Miss P's predicament - her existential need to perfectly re-form and re-present her real (but imperfect) sexual female self in order to gain recognition, love and approval - was best expressed with her comment: "I've always said if I'd been born with balls, I would've been alright in my life". This sentiment may also resonate with Kerry, whose pejorative perception (and thus, reconstruction) of her sexual female body was very much shaped by her father's expressed wish that she'd been a boy.

Experiencing a similarly dysfunctional family environment that was shrouded with secrecy and a façade of perfection covering her father's alcohol-fuelled, misogynistic violence, Kerry's childhood dissociation of mind from body, and the tendency of her mind/self to assume a 'bird's-eye view' of the life of that body, was exacerbated with the onset of puberty and the realization that her developing female body would be even more of a target of abuse. Kerry's efforts to maintain the status quo and a veneer of normality for herself and family were destabilized, however, firstly with a shift from Primary school to Intermediate, and a consequent loss of friendships, cultural familiarity, and sense of identity, and secondly, with the distressing realization that, as a now dry alcoholic, her father's violent behaviour had not lessened as she had hoped. These events combined to produce a feeling of instability, disconnectedness, and lack of control that resulted in Kerry's first major act of self-assertion in deciding to become a *vegetarian* in a household ruled by meat-loving restaurateurs; a decision that, in retrospect, Kerry perceived as driven by the need to regain some control over her unravelling life:

By the time I got to Intermediate things were really starting to come undone for me....when I was fourteen, and I would say this was probably when my struggle with food, in retrospect, started .... I decided I was going to become a vegetarian which of course just about turned

our household upside-down...it was like World War III....I think it was the first step towards me saying 'Hey I'm going to have one part of my life that I'm going to take control over'... food was really important in our house, and that's what it's going to be.

The next major threat to her sense of stability and control over her self and life came at seventeen, when Kerry decided to leave home, once again finding herself in a very different social reality and beginning to exhibit some of her father's aggressive behaviours that, in being so unacceptable to others, made her aware of just how dysfunctional her home life had been. With a feeling of "the ground just being pulled out from under me.... I don't know what's going on, I don't know how to read the world, and I don't know how to operate in it", Kerry's eating became even more controlled with her decision to become a *vegan* and join a vegan community in which she became recognized and valued for her intensive study and knowledge of nutrition, and the cultivation and preparation of vegan foods. Thus, as a 'vegetarian', and then a 'vegan', Kerry gained a social identity and a stable sense/concept of her self as wholesome, good, disciplined, knowledgeable, and respected by others. It was also an identity that allowed her to justifiably limit the amount and kinds of food she was eating, any weight lost from Kerry's already naturally slim body seen as simply a consequence of eating only good, healthy, vegan foods. But this seemingly stable, controlled, socially constructed self was to be shaken once again, with the birth (at twenty-one) of her first child.

Having decided at a young age that she would not be following her mother into the traditional feminine role of subservient domesticity and dependency, Kerry approached pregnancy and motherhood with the same need to be in control of her self/body and do things her way, rather than follow the advice and orders of midwives or child-care agencies. Having 'sailed' through a vegan pregnancy and birth, however, Kerry then found herself too thin and mentally/physically unable to consume sufficient food to provide milk for her daughter 'S', and thus - having anticipated being the perfect mother - trapped in a breast-feeding nightmare:

I just sailed into motherhood pretty easily actually, I was on my own, and had, a horrific time with breast-feeding....she was a 10 pound baby, and....any weight that I had put on when I was pregnant with her...basically I...I lost, when I had her....you had to eat a huge amount to breast-feed, and she was a hungry baby, and basically I just couldn't keep up enough calories to keep her full....I took a real...my self-confidence, my self-esteem, my self-identity took a real battering, through that phase....I'd brought this child into the world and everything



was going to be beautiful, and everything hadn't been, and so there was probably a lot of guilt, around that.

With Kerry's identity and role as a good, admired vegan preventing her from being the perfectly self-sufficient mother, and also facing the stress of sitting first-year university exams six weeks after giving birth, the first trace of *anorexia* appeared, as "over kind of, a really short period of time, about 6 or 8 weeks, I lost 9 kilos, and my hair fell out". But a shift to bottle-feeding allowed Kerry's sense of control over her own body and her and S's feeding habits to be briefly restored, until a series of events during the following year led to her first 'full blown' bout of *anorexia*. With Kerry's relationship with S's father ending soon after her birth, and wanting to separate 'S' from the negative influence of Kerry's father, Kerry 'divorced' her own father, before entering into another (short term, violent) relationship that left her pregnant once again:

So, I've been through...two relationships in a year, I've had a baby, I've divorced my father, and I'm now pregnant again with a baby that I don't know who it belongs to...yeah, in the course of a year, so things are spiralling out of control pretty rapidly

*So you have no idea who you are or what you're doing or --*

-- No...no...all I know is that there's this thing living in me that I'm going to have to feed that I don't want, so I didn't have the baby, I had a termination, and um, and I certainly don't have any regrets about that decision....But I, following that, the eating, I just stopped eating.

Her life seemingly spinning out of control, and her identities and existence as the good vegan, mother and daughter having been shaken or lost, Kerry simply could not tolerate the thought of feeding (and fattening) herself up to feed a baby that therefore seemed like "a complete parasite". For to do so would rob her of her last remaining means of survival: control of her own bodily form and function:

[It was] like 'I am having to feed this thing, and I'm not doing it'

*Was it like a survival thing?*

Yeah, I think there was just too much going on and it was just too out of control.

Thus, the existential need for control over her own self/body won out, and Kerry became severely anorexic for the next three or so years, her weight initially plunging from 52kgs down to 40.5kgs in seven months as she completely denied her body food in a way that she described as "taking something back".

For Kerry, then, *anorexia* was not about “body image” or slimness, but primarily about the control, safety, and survival of the *self* when its social/maternal identities, roles and existence were failing and beyond her control. To anorexically deny and transcend bodily needs meant escape, not only from the turmoil around her, but from her guilty, uncontrolled, failing self/body:

I absolutely, really frame it up as a control thing...rather than a body image thing...it's safety because, you know you're away with the fairies, you're either buzzing round or you're so wiped out that you can't think straight

*so it numbs you in a way?*

So it does numb you, after you get over that initial kind of buzzy bit, I mean, you're away with the fairies really, when you're really unwell, because cognitively....you're not really there, you're just going through the motions.... It's a dissociative sort of experience....like you become quite mechanical eventually.

Clearly aware that this form of self transcendence, control, and denial was *anorexia*, Kerry also knew that her *anorexia* was not about being visually attractive or pleasing to herself or others:

I didn't find the anorexic image of myself attractive at all....at all....like I'm not one of those people that looks in the mirror and sees, you know, 'I'm 40kgs, but I still looking like I've got the thighs of an ox'...I looked like shit....I mean I'd lost half my hair 'n... the whole nine yards, I couldn't keep warm...I just have an innate fear of the cold ever since that experience because I could not get warm

*Because you were basically disabling yourself eh?*

Yeah...yeah.

*Anorexia* was therefore not *just* about control, but also the painful destruction and disabling of the desiring self/body, a disablement that was also a source of pleasure. For, the upside to constant hunger and discomfort was that, after a certain period of starvation, Kerry knew that a feeling of euphoria - somewhat like a runner's high - would flood her consciousness:

I had a huge sense of comfort in feeling hungry, yeah, 'cause if I was feeling hungry it meant that sooner or later those endorphins were going to kick in, and....you'd ride that out....'cause I was really conscious about this - if I don't eat for 3 days, this is what happens - I was really clear, and that, yeah, it was worth not eating for 3 days to have that happen. And then I'd zoom around like a mad thing, you know, I could just take on the world when I was in that state.

However, Kerry also recalled a point in the anorexic experience where she felt a *loss* of control, as the *anorexia* took control of her; a shift that she likened to the development of a

“rip-roaring” drug addiction from what was initially an occasional and controlled social use. It was this feeling of losing control to *anorexia* that allowed Kerry to later (therapeutically) conceive the *anorexia* as an entity separate from her self; a demanding, devious entity that only constant awareness and vigilance could keep at bay:

So there was a real turning point between ‘I don’t control you any more, you now control me’, yeah, so really similar to the sorts of parallels that people draw around addiction....it was *anorexia* and it now had control, I had, like at that point I just had no control over it... \*it now had control\*....so it was kind of like this thing that you just had to live with.

But more than just demanding and devious, this anorexic entity had an almost superhuman power to subversively persuade that, as a means of distancing herself from full-blown *anorexia*, Kerry likened to the demonic temptation of Eve:

it’s a sneaky thing....it’s a bit like Eve ’n the apple....it’s constantly trying to find ways to, tempt you back over that wall that you’ve put between you and it, and sometimes it can be quite subversive in the way that it operates....you need to develop a consciousness about that thing and your relationship with it, and until you actually develop that consciousness, because that’s your barrier, that consciousness of that thing, whatever you want to call it, the beast.... that’s your protection.

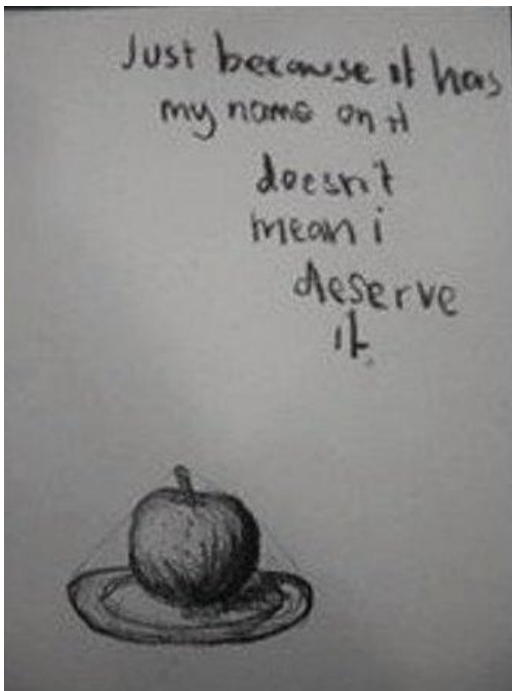


Figure 22:



(Kayla)

As part of that protection, and thus, a means of exiting from severe *anorexia*, Kerry recalled several strategies that helped her to “carve out” a stable, unified and respected social identity (and concept) for her self as a mother, an academic, and a spiritually aware person, but an identity that she also perceived as never totally free of the hooks of *anorexia*. Firstly, no matter how averse she was to the thought of eating, Kerry always kept to a strict routine of preparing and being present for her daughter’s meals, also making sure that the pantry was always well stocked, in these ways presenting to the outside world the image of a good, normal mother and family. This identity of the good mother was reinforced when, having recovered from (severe) *anorexia*, Kerry gave birth to a second child that she was able to successfully breastfeed (for 6-7 months), only to be threatened again as he became fractious and demanding, resulting in another, milder bout of *anorexia* the following year. As her children grew (and her son diagnosed with *Aspergers*), Kerry created a safe home environment based around the routines and rituals that gave her (and her son) the required high degree of order and control. Secondly, she maintained a network of close, supportive friends who assisted when the pull of *anorexia* became too great. Thirdly, in later becoming a teacher and then (in her thirties) an academic, Kerry created a recognized social and intellectual identity for (and concept of) her self that also served as a foil against *anorexia*. For, as a researcher and writer, Kerry saw her self guided and inspired by an external power, a kind of “daemon” or spiritual genius for whose ideas she was a “conduit”, her ongoing, recognizant relationship with this positive force also providing protection against a return of the anorexic ‘beast’. For, to be seduced and controlled by the destructive anorexic demon meant a mental and physical inability to serve and satisfy the creative daemonic power:

It’s kinda predictable, but it’s, I have to acknowledge that thing, and so I come in every morning and say ‘Good Morning’ to it, you know, ‘I’ve turned up for work, let’s get into it’....[My] productivity is only maintained, if I’m in touch with whatever that thing is, that....the work comes through, and I’m not in touch with that when I’m not well....there’s too much interference, ’n I’m not clear....there’s something else that comes in, so it’s kinda like that whole....that having to protect yourself from that so that you can focus on this, so it’s kinda like this battle, between the two things.... So I guess, I’ve kind of exchanged the relationships, to a certain extent.

In thus re-conceiving her self and existence as the product of a battle between (good, transcendent) intellectually creative, and (evil, beastly) anorexically destructive forces,

Kerry also drew upon Rudolph Steiner's anthroposophical 'science of the soul',<sup>84</sup> finding here a unifying framework upon which to reconstruct her self (-concept) as an essentially spiritual and intellectual mind, more or less existing within her head; her body little more than a mechanical means to support and transport that mind/self:

it's certainly given me a framework that I didn't have before, to work with, in terms of... trying to draw those fragments together in a way that's conceptually, you know it's quite a structured, way.

Reconstructing her self (-concept) in this way, two things became anathema to Kerry: *mirrors* and *photographs*. For both reflected a real body that conflicted with this reconstructed spiritual/intellectual (concept of) self and body:

There's two things that I avoid, one is mirrors, and the other is photographs...full-length mirrors are \*one way to big nightmares, I don't like them\*...but I'm quite happy to use a mirror that's just my head...I'm actually pretty comfortable in my body, it's not about body-image

*So what is it about then, when you say I don't want to see my body?*

I don't know, it's just a...I think it doesn't match...with my self-concept \*of my body\*... I'm always quite shocked when I see myself, in a full-length mirror because how I see myself in my head when I'm outside looking in, and how I actually look in the mirror are two quite different...

Towards the end of the interview process, Kerry perceived the mismatch between her *self-concept* (as a mind/head on a mechanical body) and the *mirror-image* of her real body as a conflict between a more *masculine* or androgynous concept and experience of her self and world, and the obvious *femininity* of her sexual female body; a femininity that had traditionally - and for her own mother - connoted weakness, inferiority, shame, irrationality, subjugation and objectification, and a worth based solely on appearance. In then relating this self-concept to *anorexia*, she concurred with, and further explored in relation to her own anorexic experience, the idea of *anorexia* as expressing a need to slough off or otherwise dissociate from - and thus escape - her "womany" sexual female body, as a means of *survival* of the subjective self:

[When I was anorexic] there was nothing from here [neck]...from here down, and I knew

---

<sup>84</sup> Steiner conceived human being as consisting of four different elements: the physical body, the life body, the astral body (all shared with animals), and the intellectual ego or self-consciousness (unique to humans).

how well or unwell I was by, by how far in my body I was....In terms of my self-concept .... so you know it may only have been from the mouth up.... or it may have been from the shoulders up...so I had....no consciousness of the rest of my body.... It's not mine....it was like I was a head sitting on top of this machine

*[You were] wanting to actually get rid of...if your body had disappeared...*

Yeah well it's kinda, it's you disappearing isn't it?...it's unimportant, because you're not actually using it....the body was just a vehicle on which to get my head around....I mean you could've sat my head on a trolley and that would've been fine...[the head/mind] is the essence of me and that's where I carry myself, when I'm not well.



Figure 23:

(Kayla)

*Anorexia*, then, was about Kerry reshaping her real physical form to match her self-concept as a head/mind without a body, and therefore, without the sexual parts that would mark her as typically (and pejoratively) female, a concept of her self that she had rejected since childhood:

Perhaps that's my shock about full-length mirrors, as well...that what I see doesn't actually match up with my self-concept...yeah, because what I see is quite *feminine*,

but my experience of life and how I choose to pursue things I pursue in my life, is not, typically female.

Denied any social or linguistic self-concept that situated intelligent, self-directed, recognized subjectivity within a real womanly body, and determined not to follow her mother into paternally objectified, denigrated femininity, Kerry had no existential choice but to literally and conceptually hide or erase her sexual female body, by becoming the good (socially/daemonically approved) vegan, mother and academic, or, failing that, by withdrawing into (demonically approved) disembodied *anorexia*. With this erasure necessary for subjective survival, it is not surprising that the list of identities that Kerry chose to describe her self did not include 'woman'. For Kerry, as for her parents, the term 'woman' meant dirtiness, guilt, disdain, and lack of control, and thus the need to re-present to the world a purified, desexualized, perfectly controlled self or front that led her mother to an obsession with self/home beauty, cleanliness and order, and Kerry to a dissociation from and erasure of her sexual female self/body. Thus, while Kerry has avoided becoming the objectified "womanly woman" by achieving subjective identity, existence, and recognition as an academic and an independent mother, she does so only in the knowledge that *anorexia* is always lurking, waiting to pounce on the vulnerable, inattentive subject:

It's been a big process, yeah, and I kind of feel like things are pretty good at the moment, pretty stable...but you can never, you never let your guard down with *anorexia*, 'cause the minute you do...the minute you get cocky about it, it'll knock you for six...the minute you stop discounting its presence, it'll get ya.

Whilst Kerry became anorexic when faced with the failure and unravelling of her socially/maternally reconstructed self, Cilla - knowing that she simply could *not* abstain from eating - became *bulimic* as a means of controlling, purifying, and escaping her (failed, bad) sexual female self that she too experienced and interpreted as a means of subjective survival.

By the time Cilla reached her teenage years, she had experienced a loving but also tough and ultimately destructive home-life, numerous family relocations due to her father's railway job, an accident that landed her in a faraway hospital for thirteen months, and repeated sexual abuse at the hands of 'Joe Pig', Cilla's uncle, and then her oldest brother. The combined effect of these events was to alienate Cilla not only from her family and childhood friends, but also from her self; a sexual female self and body that she came to

perceive as dirty, worthless, shameful and unloved, and therefore to be repeatedly punished, cleansed and hidden. For, despite Cilla's description of her father as a kind and gentle man, he (like so many other fathers mentioned in the interviews) was a heavy drinker, stopping at the pub each night after work, and arriving home drunk and sometimes violent; a violence that Cilla therefore perceived as her punishment:

He drank a lot...So that made my mother angst...I just adored my mother...never ever knew my father and yet he was there all the time...I really regret that Jane, 'cause he was a placid, lovely man, and he provided for us well...[Mum]'d say 'your father's coming and he's paralytic', so of course, get up in your room 'n hide', so you did that, just about every night

He would get agitated at the table with a bit of the drink, and the tiredness, and we'd be behind the table, three of us on a form...and you'd get a 'woof' 'n a 'whack' in the face, "I told you not to talk at the table"...when he was carving the meat 'n you said the wrong thing, 'whack' 'n you had a cut this long.

And with three haemophiliac sons, and constantly shifting, life was hard for her mother and also for Cilla, in willingly helping with the cooking, endless (hand) washing and cleaning. The activities that she most loved, however, and at which Cilla excelled, were schoolwork, sports, and dance. But with successive experiences of abuse (and an inability to tell her mother, or a lack of response when she finally revealed her uncle's abuse), the shame and secrecy of pubertal development, and the family's favouring of her younger, prettier, more feminine sister, Cilla's early sense/concept of herself as a good, obedient, helpful and successful child began to crumble:

*When you were an adolescent, how did you see your body, did you see --*

-- Oh no, I hid it...I didn't wear...I only wore long sleeves 'n...I was happy with your softball uniform, 'n your cricket uniform, everything down to the feet... I didn't want any breasts or period

*Yeah, so would you say then, you didn't want to be seen as having a sexual body, or as having a female body, or what?*

Probably female body I would've thought, yeah

*You would rather have seen it as a covered body then, it doesn't have any --*

-- No breasts

*So you didn't want you to be female or sexually female?*

No, no.

I didn't particularly like my sister, I love her now, because she, got everything, she was the pretty little blonde...always the flower girl...you know, nine, ten times...I said to her 'why don't they pick me this time?', and it wasn't 'cause I was plain, it was just that she was pretty, and she was a really...agreeable sort of a child...happy go lucky...very feminine.



To hide the sense of shame, guilt, inferiority and worthlessness now correlated with having a sexual female body, and thereby create an image of her self as a good girl in the eyes of others, Cilla developed a “bolshie” front or façade, based around her ability to achieve at school and on the sports field. Having worked hard to be the best in her class and sports teams, however, Cilla would then find herself afraid of being in the spotlight, and, failing to maintain her high standards, would therefore drop down to the safety and relative obscurity of lower grades:

I studied to be top of the class, and then they'd put me up to C4-A, and I'd get probably in the last ten, and I'd think 'oh good, I can go down to my mates now' ....so I was proud of where I was at, but I didn't like being up there, at the top, there was too much pressure for me  
*Why wouldn't you have been able to maintain it?*  
I don't think, I just thought I couldn't...not worthy....I was actually probably failing up there on purpose.

Thus, by High school, Cilla's constructed façade and image of her self - as a good achiever and, therefore, as recognized, loved and admired for her academic and sporting skills - had begun to crack. But with two relocations causing her to fall badly behind in her learning, as well as losing friendships and the stable sense of identity they had given her, Cilla came to see herself as a “dummy” whose only way to get attention was through rebellion and trouble-making. And so, as she put it, “I headed for the naughtiest girl in the class, and stuck with her”. In this way, Cilla's dreams for her future, and thus, the forging of an active, self-directed, successful, admired identity and sense of self, were lost:

[I] gave up, my plans went out the window, by the time I went to...the third College, my dreams had gone...of what I wanted to be, and where I wanted to go. So, from there, it was all down hill, getting married early.

With her good reconstructed self/image in tatters, Cilla left school and home and went to live and work in Wellington, marrying at eighteen, and, at twenty, giving birth to her daughter 'K'. For Cilla, marriage was an opportunity to escape from her family, and recreate an identity and life for her self as a good wife and mother; an opportunity taken up despite a lack of sexual attraction to men, and a growing attraction to women. In reflecting on the changes in self (-concept) as she moved from childhood into adolescence, Cilla agreed with the suggestion that she went from being and feeling loved for who she was, to feeling recognized and loved only on the basis of what she achieved, and how she looked, and, having failed to earn the (subjective) recognition and approval of her parents,

marriage and motherhood provided a place of safety and a stable, socially approved identity. However, because of Cilla's lack of heterosexual attraction, and her inability to reveal the abuse that left her repulsed by the (sexual) male body, the marriage faltered and ended after four years. It was then that Cilla began to explore relationships with women, falling in love and entering into an eleven-year (closeted) relationship with 'D', and raising 'K' within the Mormon community to which 'D' belonged. Initially loving, the relationship ultimately soured as Cilla's distrust of others, and D's allegiance to the church (and her ex-husband) pulled them apart. For Cilla, now in her mid-thirties, this break-up inspired the desire to find her self again. So she and 'K' set off for Australia and the Blue Mountains where they lived within and were embraced and nurtured by a community of 'hippy lesbians' who gave Cilla the space and energy to begin to rediscover and express her self. As she described this time, "I was creative, I used to run for miles, I had runner's high...the whole seven years I was there". Having, like her mother, sometimes struggled with her weight, Cilla was now slim and taking pleasure in her appearance: "I looked the best I'd ever looked...I was eight stone, and felt stunning". With 'K' becoming pregnant and giving birth to an "Italian baby", Cilla also became a grandmother, and then - when 'K' returned to work - a mother to her grandson.

But with her grandchild developing haemophilia, and the family compelled to return to New Zealand, the seemingly stable self and identities that Cilla had created - as independent, successful mother, grandmother, chef, and sportswoman - began to fall down around her, leading to a nine-month experience of *bulimia*. Devastated to have left her Sydney friends and returned to a damp, dark, dilapidated house in the middle of a cold Waikato winter, Cilla's self and world completely collapsed when 'K' and her son left home to live with K's new boyfriend:

We came back in the winter, ohh, in Hamilton, and, I got a job, I hated it....she met this ^guy....and that threw me right into bulimia

*Yeah, things had fallen apart a bit?*

Yeah

*And your sense of self...how did you feel then?*

Ohh, I felt in the gutter... there was nobody...there was nobody.... I was comfort eating, I was totally...planning what I was going to buy, and eat 'n come home 'n spew it up

*So it was almost like your identity...you'd sort of lost your identity*

Oh I'd lost it within....I'd had...a purpose, I had no purpose, no purpose whatsoever, and my daughter was venturing off with...my baby

*so you were losing your role as a mother as well?*

Yeah...the role of a mother 'n a grandmother...that baby boy was in my home from birth, and in my arms from birth...every day

*Yeah...so you could almost say then, that it felt like you didn't exist anymore?*

Yeah I did...did feel like I didn't exist...and I could easily have committed suicide.

*Bulimia*, then, was a means to comfort, control, cleanse, and punish her self, at a time when Cilla felt totally 'in the gutter'. Stripped of the positive, admired familial/social identities with which she had reconceived and recovered her abused, inadequate sexual female self/body as a good, attractive, purposeful individual, Cilla found her own private way to rid that self of now exposed and overwhelming feelings of badness, dirtiness, shame, and worthlessness:

[I was] just throwing up the bad stuff I thought...that I'd bought...specifically to abuse myself...once I vomited up, I felt in control

*Some bulimics have talked about it, or anorexics....as a sense of like cleansing and purifying the body*

Yeah, oh definitely...definitely all stemming back to the childhood thing

*The abuse?*

Yeah, yeah...God yeah

*In what way....when you say it goes back to the childhood --*

-- Well I was hurting myself...I felt I was hurting myself

*Was that a sort of a --*

-- Punishment...yeah

*Punishment...and a purifying of the sexual stuff?*

Yeah

*And a feeling of punishing yourself then as a girl, or what...as a female, or as sexual, or what did you want to rid yourself of?*

Ohh, the past I think...yeah...total childhood...and yet I had some great childhood memories too, you see

*Yeah, so it's the sexual...*

Yeah it's just the sexual...element of the childhood, yeah

*And the sexual element of yourself as a woman?*

Mmm (agreement).

In controlling, purifying, and punishing her bad sexual self/body, and thereby delivering to it a (albeit temporary) measure of goodness and redemption, *bulimia* was, for Cilla, a hopeful means for survival of the otherwise seemingly irredeemable, unlovable self:

*If you felt like that, you could then say that your bulimia, and the food 'n that, was....a means of survival for you, when you had nothing?*

It was...it was a means of survival, and it did get me through...what else could've got me through, and I think about that, even now...and yet, it was only a matter of probably, I'm thinking 8 months...but 8 months is a long time to abuse your body like that...my teeth started to go already, with the acid...I had pains in my kidneys 'n...'cause I had no nourishment, I was as weak as hell.

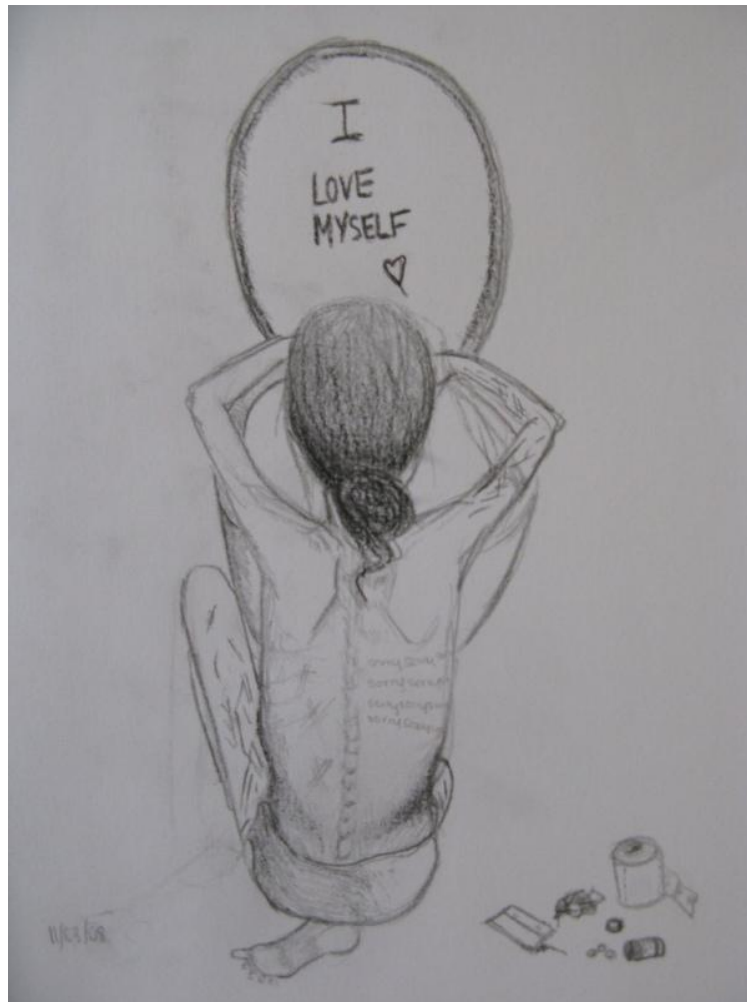


Figure 24:

(Kayla)

It was when Cilla realized that the cycle of bingeing and purging and the damage it was doing to her body may spin out of control that she sought help through a counsellor and self-help books, and, through hard work, re-established for her self a stable, admired identity as a perfectionist in whatever job she undertook. But, for Cilla, the existential need to be seen as perfect in whatever she does not only made her an excellent employee, but also turned her work into an obsession driven by the persistent need for recognition and approval of her achievements:

my work's kind of an obsession.... I need to pull back a bit Jane...I'm tired, you know....  
 [but] it's hard to pull back 'cause I feel important ...see?  
*because it's always a conditional [approval]....based on what you do, and how you present yourself, you can never actually have it, you can never stop, can you?*  
 No, no, you can't  
*And so there's this striving, to always get this love [and approval]*  
 Oh god yeah...to give the very best service...the bosses have got to see me to be doing the very best that a person could do...it's quite a hard thing to keep up some days, you know....it's become a habit, because, as I say, there's that façade, and that barrier

*Because what would happen if you stopped?*

\*Well I'd be a failure, wouldn't I?...I would be a failure to myself...yeah, too...and they wouldn't see me as being successful...you see?\*....I've got to be perfect

But this obsessive drive for the perfect *performance* that would maintain her own and her bosses' recognition and approval also applied to Cilla's *appearance*, the need to be seen as attractively slim and self-controlled resulting in a constant monitoring of and desire to reduce her weight and size; a desire also shared by her mother and daughter. For, to Cilla's eyes, her ample body was huge and unattractive, though not to the point of wanting its surgical reduction:

I see myself as huge, absolutely huge...but I also had a very...a mother that was always dieting ....and then I kind of did the same to my daughter

*do you like [your body], or do you dislike it because you --*

-- No I dislike it...dislike it's shape

*Why, because you see it as a big body, or as a female body?*

Yeah, bigger, a big body...yeah, not so much the female thing

*So you're sort of, quite comfortable with your femaleness?*

Yeah, yeah...I wouldn't want to be a boy, no, not ever

*No...do you see it as a sexual body?*

Not now

*Or an asexual body?*

Asexual

*and you're critical of it?*

Yeah I am critical of it....I'd never have it operated on though, isn't that funny.

Unable (in later years) to maintain the ideally slim, youthful form required for social recognition and approval, Cilla's obsession with maintaining the perfectly disciplined performance was accompanied by a need for the comfort of food, for the (desexualizing) cleansing and hiding of her (bad) sexual self afforded by a larger body shape, and for the control and denial of that self achieved through dieting. But the *fear* of failure and thus a shattering of the perfect self/identity that drove Cilla to constantly perfect her work and appearance has also led to private *compulsions* or *rituals* that she perceives to be transmutations of her earlier *bulimia*, and that, in producing feelings of (self) control, order, cleanliness, retribution and goodness, serve to relieve that fear and related anxieties:

You know what I've got now....I've got this thing, if I go to stay in a motel, I've got to cleanse all the handles before I even touch one, yeah, I'll have wipes with me, all the switches, and I have to put my sheets over the sheets in the motel, and my own pillow, and take that top duvet off in case somebody's bonked on it

*So there's....an inner person saying 'if I do this, I'm still good' ....even if I'm losing control out there in my workplace, in here I'm still in control...I'm clean, the house is clean, everything's in order, in your own mind' ...does that make sense?*

Yeah, very much so Jane...and that's why I've ripped the nails to bits the last couple of days ...I'll bite them all off, like a torture, I've done it now....it's a release, it's like a tranquillizer  
*So it's also self-punishment, or self, self-mutilation in a way, isn't it?*

Yeah, yeah...it is self-mutilation, yeah...it is.... it was so far down, one of them, it was bleeding.

And, for Cilla, these punishing, purifying rituals, like the *bulimia* they replaced, are a response to the seemingly indelible, inescapable image and perception of her real sexual female self as dirty and worthless; the image that had been inscribed in, and endured since, childhood:

*When you say that the bulimia was replaced with other things, I'm thinking that, it's this constant need, like if we have this image of ourselves inside as ...still this perhaps a lingering feeling of --*

-- Worthlessness

*Worthlessness...or dirtiness?*

Oh definitely, yeah...all of that, dirty...yeah dirty

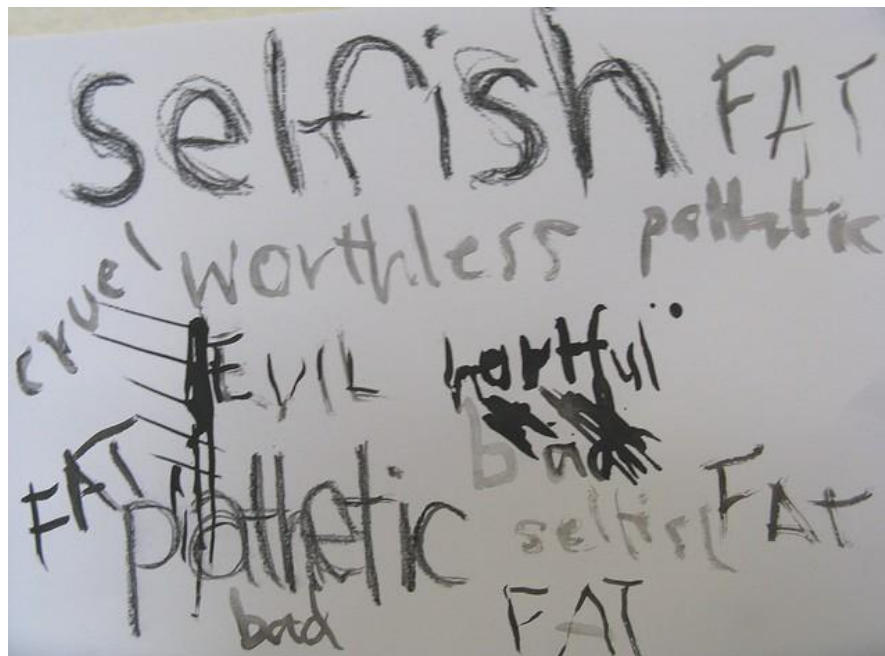


Figure 25:

(Kayla)

However, now in a stable and enduring lesbian relationship, an adoring mother to her family and two dogs, and more concerned with the inner, spiritual aspects of her existence, Cilla's self-concept and existence as a good, worthy, and loved person is gaining a unity,

stability, and coherence that may be shaken - but never shattered - by external forces or criticisms. As she sums it up: “I may not ever be completely right, in myself, but I... enough for me, enough for me to cope, in this world”.

By the same token, if all hope is lost of ever reconceiving and reconstituting one’s monstrous, demonic, fragmented sexual female self and body as an essentially - or even socially or bulimically reconstructed - whole, good, recognizable, lovable, subjective self, then death may seem like the only escape.



*Silentstones*

(Kayla Wright, 1991-2008)

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology and results of practical research into the various stages and processes in the development of female selfhood, as they may relate to the hypothesis of an originary spirogenetic essence (and essential female self) that, through its familial, socially and discursively imposed (de)construction, fragmentation, and demonization, is presenting the (necessary but not sufficient) conditions for the development of eating (and associated) disorders in girls/women. In Chapter 6, these results are analysed and interpreted in relation to the hypothesis, in order to conclude whether or not they provide support for its tenets. I then further interpret and discuss the hypothesis and findings in relation to the biomedical, psychological, and (feminist) cultural and psychoanalytic theories around eating (and associated) disorders, as presented in Chapter 4.





## Chapter 6

### *Life Cycle of the Essential Female*

The analysis of results from the interviewing of ten women, six with previous experience of an eating disorder and four without, permits the painting of a six-part picture of the (child, adolescent and adult) stages and processes of (mal)development of the Western, patriarchally inscribed female - and also eating disordered - self that may be described as follows:



Figure 27:

*Me and My Selves*

(Lewie)<sup>85</sup>

i) There is an original, subjective self that was variously experienced, known and described by participants as: ‘the original person’, ‘just you’, the ‘essence’, the ‘total complete self and soul’ (Lewie); ‘the real me’ (Jean, Fleur, Gorgie, Sunshine, Lewie); the ‘core’, ‘natural’, and ‘connected’ self (Jean); ‘who I was’, ‘my authentic self’, ‘the person who runs’ (Gorgie); ‘just me’ (Gwen); ‘the whole person’ (Cilla, Gorgie); the ‘perfect form’

<sup>85</sup>This work is from Lewie's photographic depiction of the development of her female self in *The Hare, The Bear, and The Doll*, as recounted on pp. 192-93.

(Miss P); 'just being' (Gina); the self that is seen, known, and unconditionally loved for 'who I am' (all). Even though most participants recalled being aware that this self was female, this was not a reason to see themselves as different from, or to be seen, valued or treated any differently to boys. In addition, for Gorgie, Sunshine, Lewie, Gina, Gwen, Fleur, Jean and Cilla, this original self was experienced and remembered as a whole, complete, unified, self-motivated mindbody self that perceived and knew herself as a real/essential person, with her own thoughts, feelings, desires, and abilities. This self was experienced as being loved for who she was; as doing things purely for the enjoyment and for their own sake; and, as living/being in the moment. In the above artwork, Lewie represents this *real me* - the originally and freely active, creative, loved, exuberant self - as the *Bear Girl* that, now isolated, dispirited, immobilized, and precariously suspended, feels the loss of her unconditional existence, recognition, and love.

ii) Whether it occurred in childhood or with the onset of puberty, all participants, to one degree or another, experienced a shift in perception of that originary self, described as a shift from seeing and knowing one's self through one's own non-judgemental eyes, to a state of seeing that self through the critical, objectifying, dissecting eyes of others (particularly the father/parents), for whom its femaleness now meant difference, inadequacy, inferiority, restraint, and/or the need to hide or modify one's (sexual) female parts. With the onset of puberty, however, this shift in self-perception *intensified* as almost all participants (either subtly or violently) learnt to re-perceive and reconceive their sexually (non-)developing female body as a source of imperfection (of form), shame, guilt, and badness, and thus, the further awareness that there were parental expectations and ideals to be met if one was to be recognized and exist as, a good/perfect and therefore lovable girl/daughter. In all cases, the need and striving to achieve these ideals and expectations required the actual and conceptual fragmenting, secreting or 'pruning off' of one's shameful sexual parts, and/or a separation of mind/head from body that resulted in a sudden or gradual *loss* of the previously whole (child) self, and a real or felt separation and alienation from parents, siblings and friends. The sense of alienation from the mother was further exacerbated by an awareness that the pursuit and attainment of contemporary (equality based) patriarchal ideals and expectations of (attractive, active, successfully self-directed) feminine subjectivity required the participants' rejection of the traditional ideals of (attractive, passive, subservient, objectified) femininity that had shaped and constrained their mother's life and sense/concept of self.

iii) This fragmentation, alienation and loss of (knowledge of) the original (but now bad, shameful) self and the anxious, obsessive pursuit of paternal expectations and ideals was very much associated with the reconstruction of a perfect *pretend* self or form that was presented to the social world in order to gain paternal/parental recognition, approval, and love. In Figure 27, this pretend self dually appears as the *Doll* and *Hare Girls*, these co-existing aspects representing the participants' pubertal experience of shifting from a state of being recognized and unconditionally loved for who one real-ly is, to a state of being *conditionally* recognized and loved for how one *looks*, and what one *does*; that is, for one's perfected sexually attractive appearance, and playful yet disciplined performances. Subjective female existence was no longer a given, but depended upon the daily pursuit and visible attainment of the ideal boyishly feminine form and attributes (e.g. slimmed, visibly self-disciplined sexual attractiveness, intelligence, fitness, sporting/professional competitiveness and achievement) that were, through verbal or gestured shows of parental (dis-)approval, conveyed to the pubescent girl. And, as Lewie's picture shows, essential to the attainment of (recognition of) this perfect sexually desirable (*Doll*) form and actively, playfully, but also frantically and obsessively pursued (*Hare*) function was the repressive fragmentation, denial, and overcoming of the real but imperfect, dirty, bad (and thus unlovable) sexual female (*Bear*) self/body, now dispiritedly and precariously sub-sisting out of social and conscious sight and mind.

iv) Because the pretended self would often include positive (beautiful, intelligent, sporty, artistic) aspects of the original self, attributes and abilities that were once part of the wholly integrated subjective existence and expression of that self became the basis for the acquired appearance, identities, and achievements designed to earn parental recognition, love, and thus, the persisting, re-formed existence of the self. But the recruitment of these attributes to serve the pretend self brought with it a fear of failure to achieve and maintain the (boyishly) perfect form/performance that not only forced some participants to deceive in order to appear successful, but also ultimately and self-fulfillingly resulted in an actual failure to perform, and parental disappointment and disapproval. The prospect or reality of this failure saw all participants turning to and pursuing the (more achievable) standards required for access to other (boyishly subjectifying) social or transcendent identities (e.g. girlfriend, vegan, wife, mother, nurse, athlete, academic, herd-tester, stripper, counsellor, Christian, spiritual or astrological follower) so as to construct and maintain the perfect

self/form and performance - and thus earn the recognition and love - required for ongoing subjective existence.

v) For the eating disordered (hereafter 'ED') participants, the actual or perceived *failure* or *inability* to achieve or maintain this perfect (parentally/socially/transcendentally prescribed) pretend self brought a fear of exposure of the real 'dirty', 'bad' sexual female self beneath, and thus, the possibility of subjective *non-existence* that resulted in a need to withdraw from the social realm, relinquish the paternally adjudicated pursuit of the perfect form, and conduct one's own inner battle for the goodness and survival of that real self. Thus, for *all* ED participants, their experience of *anorexia/bulimia/orthorexia* was not about fatness or the pursuit of slimness *per se*. Rather, it was about the self-directed, ritualized control of eating, drinking and other physical activities (e.g. exercise, laxatives, purging), as a means of desexualizing, degendering, erasing, purifying, punishing, comforting and thus achieving the good/perfect, lovable form and ongoing existence of their imperfect, fragmented, uncontrolled, *sexual* female self/body. And whether it was seen as attractive or hideous, the (ever-greater) slimness and loss of weight produced by these activities was a visible sign *to herself* of daily success in the ongoing battle for the goodness/perfection of that real self. In retrospect, then, the participants interpreted their eating disorder as a means of taking (back) *control* of one's life; of re-forming, recognizing and protecting one's real self (the 'bad girl') as a good, lovable self when all *social* forms of identity, recognition and existence had been denied, in this way, ensuring the subjective *survival* of that self.

This *anorexic/bulimic* pursuit of the good/perfect self was therefore seen by most ED participants (i.e. Lewie, Cilla, Miss P, Gorgie, Sunshine) as expressing the desire to be a *child* again; to regain the originally whole, non-sexual, non-gendered, mindbody *form* that would mean the enduring, unconditional existence, recognition and love that they experienced in, or associated with, childhood. For, just like *Dorothy* in Miss P's perfect world, and *Peter Pan* in Gorgie's perfect story, the always childlike anorexic girl would always have the perfect (boyish) form, and thus, no matter what she did, always exist, and be recognized, loved, and forgiven, so that, as Gorgie said, "if I did something wrong, I was still me...I still existed". *Anorexia/bulimia/orthorexia* thus created a good/perfect, enduringly whole, same self/form, and thus, a stable, secure, inner (subjective) *existence* that, safely hidden from, and unable to be hurt or crushed by outside forces, gave the

participants a sense of being “in control of the control”; that is, in self-adjudicated control of the measured restraint and erasure of one’s bad, sexual female parts, and thus, of the virtuous survival of the ‘real me’. As Cilla said of her *bulimia*: “it was a means of survival, and it did get me through...what else could’ve got me through?”.

What brought an end to the eating disorder was, firstly, the realization that, at some point, this self-directed control (and goodness) of mind and body would be lost, as bodily functions collapsed and/or outside (medical, family) forces threatened to override the means of survival. Secondly, the (sufficiently redeemed) ability and opportunity to assume (more or less) socially/transcendently approved identities/roles enabled reconstruction of a (still) good, desexualized, boyishly subjectified pretend self, and thus, a measure of subjective recognition and existence within the social order. But for all ED participants, this exit from *anorexia/bulimia* was also followed by - and/or seen as a transformation of the disorder into - other obsessive-compulsive or ritualized behaviours (e.g. compulsive cleaning, working, smoking, self-harming; ritual eating, alcohol/drug dependency) or else depression. Whilst these compulsive behaviours were seen as a means to repeatedly control, purify, punish, and comfort the (sexual) female self/body just in case of collapse of the social self, they were also, along with the depression, interpreted as a conscious absence of the real self, characterized by an inner emptiness and feeling that if the social self collapsed (say, through performance failure), the person would no longer exist.

vi) Some of the participants therefore spoke of the desire and intention to recover their real, whole (child) self again, through the creation of a mental/physical space within which to revive, reunify, reintegrate and express the real sexual female self/body, free from the pejoratively objectifying and annihilating conceptions of womanhood, and the paternally/socially imposed (boyish) gender ideals and expectations that caused its fragmentary loss. During the year following completion of the interviews, what became apparent to me and to some of the participants was a gradual change in their self-perception, appearance and behaviour, and a feeling of becoming their real self again, and of wanting to know - and be seen, known and loved for - who they really are. For Gorgie, this reconnection with, and reconstitution and expression of her real, sensual, desiring self meant a desire and ability to reconnect with her daughter (and sons) and to reconstitute their bond as a ‘real’ bond of love, respect, and honesty between two subjective female beings, rather than the false tie (based on unspeakable truths) that had sustained their real-

ly fragmented, masquerading selves. And, for Lewie, to begin to reconnect with, reconstitute and express her real self meant recovery from several years of depression, and a reconnection with her mother, as acknowledged in her Christmas '10 art/card to Gina:



Figure 28: *Finding My Self, My Mother* (Lewie)

As Gina interprets Lewie's artwork and message:

The red coat is a coat that I wore in [the] UK between 1997 and 1998....it represents [Lewie's] last recalled connection with me the mother.... it is fascinating that she has chosen the comfort of the red coat to represent me encapsulating her. I see this photograph as profound, from the disconnect from mother to the transition to the healing of self; everything that your thesis represents.

### ***Interpretation of Results in Relation to the Hypothesis***

I can now relate the above summary of results to the list of factors<sup>86</sup> taken as evidence in support of the first part (or theme) of my hypothesis: namely, that there is an originary *female 'spirogenetic' essence*, and an essentially whole, integrated female *self* that is becoming fragmented and lost (to consciousness) through its familial/socially imposed (de)construction by a metaphysically misinformed symbolic order that denies its existence.

---

<sup>86</sup> See pages 161-62 for this list.

And, if I can justifiably interpret what participants subjectively experienced and identified as the ‘real me’, or the ‘original’, ‘core’, ‘whole’ female self as evidence of this essence-based female self, then the results will indeed present support for this first part of the hypothesis. So, what is it about this ‘real’ self and its processes of development and construction that supports its interpretation as an originary, spirogenetically essentially whole, (inter)subjective female self?

Firstly, most participants recalled enduringly perceiving and knowing their childhood self - the ‘real me’ - through their own *subjective* eyes, consciously experiencing it as a real, original, natural, enduringly whole, integrated *mindbody* self featuring the *already active* (and passive) powers of intuition, exuberance, self-motivation, self-knowledge, connectedness, empathy, and the open (i.e. fearless, non-anxious), wholly integrated expression (and satisfaction) of needs, interests, feelings and desires. In this way, participants experienced and described what *Aristotle* (1994) conceived as the essential categories and qualities of real, essential, substantial, relational being. But, whereas *Aristotle* conceived this natural essential/logical form as the immaterial (and *Derrida*, the material) preserve of men, *Gorgie*, *Sunshine* and *Jean* experienced their originally whole form as indistinguishably material and immaterial, and *Lewie* perceived it as something that all girls/women have, when she said, “we’re a person ...we’re an existence, we’re an essence, we are an ego”. And, while *Gorgie*, *Miss P*, *Gwenda* and *Cilla* recognized their essential self/form to be originally and enduringly female, it was experienced, in childhood, as being just as active, capable, purposeful, assertive, valuable, perfect, and loved as the essential male self, in a way that allowed them to (wholly) perceive and experience it, and *Miss P* to describe it, as a “non-gendered” self. That this essential self was consciously experienced, recognized, and remembered as such is, in itself, evidence for the originally sexed, spirogenetic nature of girls/women and their essence.

Secondly, the (childhood/pubertal) *shift* in self-perception in which participants learnt to reconceive their essential female self in imperfect and pejorative relation to, and through the sexually objectifying, dissecting eyes of the essentially perfect *male* self/form can be interpreted as marking the beginning of the metaphysically based, parentally/socially imposed *denial*, *deconstruction* and *dissociation* of her spirogenetic essence and essential self/form. For, as participants realized the need to prune, hide or otherwise reshape the ‘dirty’, inadequate, uncontrolled, and thus socially unacceptable (sexual) parts of that self,



there was, for nine of the ten participants, a real and conceptual fragmentation and loss of their originally whole self that *Gorgie* identified with the words, “over time you completely lose your self”; *Sunshine* acknowledging the same loss of self (-knowledge) in recalling, “everything got muddled...I didn’t know who I was anymore”. Because this parentally inaugurated, muddling fragmentation and loss of the essential self was experienced as a splitting off of mind- and body-parts, and a detachment of *mind/head* from sexual female *body* (with mind/self and head remaining one), it supports my interpretation of the essential self as having an originally and enduringly spirogenetically whole, determinate form that, in being essentio-socially constructed, and able to be fragmented and variously reconstructed, is *also* fluidly mutable.

In addition, the incongruities and contradictions in the participants’ narratives, particularly in the mother/daughter couple’s understandings of each other’s perspectives, motives, actions, and experiences may be interpreted as resulting from (and indicating) the pubertal fragmentation, demonization, silencing, and dissociation of an essentially whole, intersubjectively perceiving, congruously knowing self, and her consequently isolated, discordant strivings to meet paternal/social ideals. For example, Lewie’s belief that, in contrast to her own prudery, her mother Gina was far too willing to show her own body, reveals the misconceptions that arose due to their pubertal dissociation - from self, and from each other. For, as Lewie discovered in reading Gina’s interview transcript, her mother’s apparent unselfconsciousness was in fact a deliberate effort not to pass on to Lewie the deep sense of shame and guilt over her ‘dirty’ sexual female body that Gina herself had experienced since childhood. It was this breaking of the silence, and the desire to reclaim their essential selves, that, for both mother/daughter couples, saw the incongruities and the sense of alienation begin to dissolve in what both *Gorgie* and *Gina* experienced and described as a “healing”. Similarly, *Cilla*’s incongruous recollection of her father as a ‘placid’, ‘lovely’, though violent man may be coherently understood as the view of an essentially whole, but pubertally de-formed, fragmented, demonized, and alienated girl/woman who therefore perceives her bad sexual self/body as deserving of and redemptively requiring the violence as *punishment* from a therefore good, loving, and otherwise placid father. Thus, contradiction and incongruity characterize and reveal the secreting, silencing, confusing fragmentation and loss of the originally and essentially whole, integrated, congruous self.

Thirdly, that the pubertal pruning and reconstruction of the real, 'bad', sexual female self/body into a (boyishly) androgynous form that might meet parental expectations and ideals was perceived by participants as the daily construction of a false or *pretend* self or form - known for her appearances, identities and achievements, *not* for who she was - supports interpretation of that real self as a *non-constructed*, and therefore, an original or *essential* self. And because several participants were able to maintain some (good) aspects of the fragmented essential self, incorporating them into the pretend self, and then later wishing to find and reconstitute this essential self into its originally whole, integrated, relational form, the essential self can justifiably be conceived as not only fluidly mutable and (re)constructible, but also *enduringly* and recognizably *same*, this enduring (though fragmented) sameness being a condition of its reconstitution. Further, because the whole, integrated form of the (fragmented) essential self must have, at some deeper level, been preserved in order for (a need for) restitution to occur, *Gorgie* and *Fleur's* self-perceived need to reconstitute their fragmented, lost, female self offers support for my hypothesis of an underlying, persistingly same, specifically human/female spirogenetic essence or (potential) form that would serve as the memory and 'blueprint' for this reconstitution.

Fourthly, because the participants uniformly rejected the traditional feminine ideals and roles of (passive, subservient, objectified) womanhood that had oppositionally reshaped and redefined their mothers, their pursuit of contemporary ideals can be understood as motivated by the realization that to become (and be seen as) a real sexual *woman* meant imperfection, deformation, fragmentation, badness, and ultimately, a subjective *non-existence* from which not even male appropriation could save them. Recall *Gorgie*, for example, describing her sexually developing, womanly self:

[As] a woman, or a, a girl, I was a teenage.... I felt...that wasn't perfect, I wasn't the sort of...the ideal....as a boy, I was perfect...so if I did something wrong, I was still me...I still existed...but as a girl, or a woman, I felt that if I did something wrong, \*I wouldn't be me anymore...wouldn't exist\*.

And *Lewie*, describing the existential consequences of the fragmentation and loss of her essential self that came with sexual development and approaching womanhood:

My whole world started depending on it, on what mark I got for my art....and if I didn't get that, I was absolutely nothing....my entire existence depended on that one, that mark.

And also *Kerry, Gina, Jean, and Miss P's* conception of their reconstructed self as having, not a sexual, womanly form, but rather, a disembodied, mechanized, masculine or childlike form. That the term 'woman' meant *non-existence* in others', and thus, in the participants' eyes, lends support to my contention that the familial/socially imposed (de)construction of the (sexually developing) essential female self by a (Platonic/Cartesian based, poststructurally modified) metaphysics and language that denies the existence of real, sexual women is causing a fragmentation and loss of that self. But it also suggests that it was the prospect of looming womanhood - and subjective non-existence - that motivated the participants to pursue and attain paternally prescribed ideals and identities (i.e. the perfect form), in the hope of maintaining some (albeit false) sense/concept of wholly defined, recognized, subjective existence for that 'de-formed' self. If this was indeed the case, then the participants' correlation of the term 'woman' - and real womanhood - with subjective annihilation permits an interpretation of the reconstructed, pretend self (the *Hare/Doll Girl, or Miss Perfect*) as a form of *survival* of the essential, but fragmented, female subject. This interpretation then offers explanation as to why participants such as *Miss P* and *Lewie* experienced (in either dreams or waking) an intense and enduring fear of failure to maintain parentally/socially imposed ideals, and thus, a shattering of the façade of a perfectly whole, controlled (childlike) form. For this shattering would not just mean the shameful exposure of the real, 'grubby', imperfect, voracious, sexual self hidden beneath, but worse, the social, symbolic and psycho-somatic *annihilation* of that self.

Fifthly, even though most participants *did* manage to maintain a good/perfect pretend self through their daily (often obsessive) pursuit of boyishly androgynous ideals and identities (of slim, self-disciplined, sexually attractive appearance and sporting/artistic/intellectual/maternal achievement), thereby gaining parental/social/transcendental approval and subjective existence, they still felt 'robotic', 'shell'-like, 'grubby', 'false', 'muddled', 'anxious', 'insecure' and 'empty' inside; feelings that all related to the fragmentation and/or loss of their real, original self. These feelings may therefore be interpreted as expressing a visceral awareness that, no matter how hard they tried, the pursuit and attainment of the ideal form was not going to bring (back) the essentially whole, self-subsisting, female selfhood, or the (inter)subjective expression and satisfaction of the wholly integrated needs and desires (and particularly the need for unconditional love) that they experienced as children. At best, it brought a conditional, and thus, repeatedly fought for, false subjectivity, the daily winning dependent upon erasing one's 'imperfect' sexual

female self, and successfully (boyishly) imitating what was socially and linguistically recognized and defined as the epitome of perfection: the (phallic) male form. But at worst, the pursuit of this ideal form and performance ultimately resulted in a failure and loss of essential abilities that had initially won praise and approval for the reconstructed self, but that over time became disabled by the fear of failure, and thus, exposure of the real (bad) sexual female self.

That the participants experienced these (sporting, artistic, and maternal) abilities as sublime moments of reconnection of mind to body; of self to others, and of exhilaration in feeling the natural movements and functions of the mindbody, but then, of *loss* through recruitment into the pursuit of an artificial form of existence, lends support to my conception of the essential female self as having essentially fixed, wholly integrated (but also developing) form, functions and abilities. For, only the (paternally enforced) degradation and dis-integration of what was an *essentially whole*, functionally integrated, female form would cause a sense of inner loss, turmoil, confusion, fear, emptiness, desensitization and dysfunction that would persist even through erasure of the now 'de-formed', uncontrollably 'bad' sexual female parts, and the construction of what was a seemingly 're-formed', reunified, perfectly functioning self. And it is arguably because this reconstructed self was in fact little more than a mechanically conceived and constructed, iteratively and robotically performative *imitation* of the perfect phallic *male* form, identities, and abilities that once spirogenetically motivated and integrated *female* abilities (e.g. breastfeeding, athleticism) became dysfunctional.

It seems, therefore, that the sense of inner loss, turmoil and emptiness - a loss that *Lewie* experienced and described as feeling like an empty cup that each day must be refilled - was a loss of, and mourning for, the self/socially (de)constructed, demonized, essentially spirogenetic (sexual) female self, masked and banished to the unconscious, hellish depths where, deprived of her original form, function, recognition and love, she barely sub-sists.



Figure 29:

*The Demise of Demonic Woman*

(Lewie)

This interpretation of the development of sexual selfhood as the parentally/socially imposed fragmentation and loss of the *essential* female self/form, and the ideal-based, iterative reconstruction of a boyishly imitative self as an ultimately unfulfilling, always uncertain means to goodness and subjective survival, then allows me to interpret participants' experience of eating disorders as a conditional consequence of this loss. That is, as a desperate, *internally fought* battle to perfectly re-form and thus sustain the (bad) essential female self, in the face of a (feared) shattering of the ideal self/form, and thus, subjective annihilation. And if I can justify this interpretation, it will then provide support for the second part of my hypothesis: namely, that the parentally/socially imposed pathological (de)construction and loss of the *essential* (sexual) female self, and a failure to reconstruct or maintain a perfect pretend (social) self/identity, is producing a state of existential distress in girls/women that is resulting in the development of eating (and associated) disorders as an inner, self-directed means of subjective survival.

From the time of pubertal development if not before, all ED participants experienced a splitting or fragmentation of their original, essentially whole mindbody selves, as they learnt (through parental/familial disapproval or abuse) to see that sexual female self as now imperfect, inferior, bad, and shamefully uncontrolled, and thus, to be pruned off and hidden away beneath a perfectly reconstructed self/body. This pretend self was required to visibly demonstrate the pursuit and attainment of, not traditionally objectifying, but boyishly *subjectifying* ideals of slimmed, self-disciplined beauty, sexual attractiveness, and ever-higher achievement in order to attain and maintain the perfect form (*Doll*), and performance (*Hare*), and therefore achieve the parental/social recognition required for ongoing subjective existence. And when inability or fear of failure resulted in actual failure to perform (whether in sport, ballet, art, schoolwork, veganism or motherhood), a slim, reconstructed, sexually attractive *appearance* became the means to social recognition, approval, and existence. As Sunshine put it:

Girls learn to dissect themselves in a way... then it becomes ‘oh, what’s wrong with this part ...how do I improve that part?’ And the reason why has to be because you feel otherwise, you won’t be admired, you won’t be attractive, you won’t be loved.

But pursuit of this perfected appearance ultimately brought a horrifying realization: to be likeably attractive (or even unattractive) to boys/men required (hetero)sexual activity, and thus, the forceful reduction of the subjective female self to a (decapitated, dismembered) object/hole of male desire, use, and abuse; that is, to what Sartre (1976) saw as undefinable “holes” and “slime”, and to what Gina remembered as “that awful sexuality thing”. In other words, a shattering of the perfect feminine (*Doll*) form, and an unavoidable and uncontrollable reduction to what I have argued above to be the ‘demonic’, ‘de-formed’, essential sexual female self/parts, and thus, to the very state of subjective and symbolic fragmentation and non-existence that they had striven so hard to escape. It is within the context of this externally imposed loss of control and fragmentation of what had been reconstructed and maintained as the good bi-gendered self that I situate and interpret participants’ eating disorders as a self-imposed *withdrawal* from the social order and the ultimately self-destructive pursuit of gender ideals, in an attempt to *regain* the control that had permitted a (boyish) reformation of the deformed, fragmented essential (sexual) self, only to then be taken from them.

This interpretation of eating disorders then accounts for and explains participants' description of their disorder as not primarily about fatness or the pursuit of slimness, but about the 'taking back' of *control* of their goodness and existence when all external forms had been denied, leaving their real self and existence spinning out of control. This control was regained and exercised through the waging of a daily 'battle' to be 'good enough', in which the ritualistic denial (or purging) of food and enforcement of activity were the weapons used to hurt, punish, purify, restrain, reform, and thus make *good*, whole, and lovable again, the *bad* sexual female self and body. And, because participants perceived and used the denial of food and consequent weight loss as a way to erase their bad, shameful, sexual female self/parts, and even become a child again, the main goal of this war of attrition can justifiably be seen as the desexualizing, defeminizing reformation and redemption to a state of (childlike) perfection, of an *essential female self* that, in becoming sexual, had fallen so far from paternal grace. For, to have a purified, desexualized body was to regain the "perfect form" that meant self-control, -recognition and -love, and thus, perpetuation of the subjective existence of the 'real me'. But to be a woman, and especially one denied access to socially approved (boyish) imitations of phallic subjectivity, was to be without form, without control of one's existence, and therefore - as the essential, demonically *sexual* female self cast down into the formless, fiery 'plenum' - without subjective existence, recognition, or love. On this interpretation, then, it was not the *fat* body, nor even the *sexual* body that was the anorexic girl/woman's *nemesis*, but rather, her *essential* sexual female *self*; the real but symbolically de-formed, depressed, deadened, silenced 'me'. And the inner battle waged against that nemesis was in fact a battle for its survival, in which the *participant* now had the power to set, judge, and meet her own standards and means of purity and perfection, thereby gaining a control over her existence that, in no longer depending upon outer (paternal/social) standards and judgements, could not be so easily taken away. As *Miss P* described it,

You're still in control, 'cause that person's not getting at you...it's like an animal attacking you, you withdraw...like a bird at a snail...I was safe, because I was in control under my shell, and I was in control when I was anorexic, people couldn't hurt me.

*Anorexia*, then, is seemingly an *escape* not only from the outer world of expectations and fears of failure, but also from the prospect of de-formed, diabolic *rejection* and *annihilation* faced by those entrapped within real sexual womanly bodies. This interpretation then permits explanation as to why - when asked what identities they

would choose to describe themselves - *Kerry, Gina, Gorgie, Miss P* (and *Jean*) did not choose the term 'woman'. It also explains why, even after their eating disorder had subsided, and they had acquired a reasonably stable set of socially approved identities (as the good wife, mother, academic, spiritualist etc.), the participants still felt the need to control, purify, punish and (repressively) erase the still 'bad', sexual female self through the private practise of ritualistic, obsessive-compulsive and self-abusive behaviours such as cleaning, dieting, nail-biting, smoking/drinking, or (violent/detached) sex. And why *Kerry, Gina* and *Sunshine* would erase their sexual womanly self/body by conceiving the (good) self as a mind/head on a 'trolley', a 'machine', or a collection of bones. For all these strategies served to defeminize, desexualize, and thus give a fixed, unified, controlled (masculine) form and order to, and hence an escape from, their otherwise de-formed, disordered, essential, demonically sexual, female self. And finally, this interpretation of eating disorders permits explanation as to why some participants (*Cilla, Gina, Gwen*) were, in older or post-menopausal age, willing to accept the identity of 'woman'. In identifying themselves as *asexual*, the term 'woman' no longer held the (same) power to divide, demonize and destroy their subjective female selves. Hence, as Lewie portrays it, the older, asexual woman may finally, sadly begin to reclaim, reunite, and express her essential female self - the 'real me' - once again.



Figure 30:

*Life Cycle of the Essential Female Self*

(Lewie)



But the fragmentary reconception of the essential sexual female self as de-formed, disordered, disconnected, and thus subjectively and symbolically non-existent that compels girls/women to pursue contemporary (equality-based) gender ideals - or retreat within to pursue her own anorexic/bulimic ideals - in order to gain/retain a (perfect) 'form' of (boyishly) subjective existence, is not the product of equality feminism. Rather, it can be seen as a direct result of the poststructuralist metaphysics of theorists such as Derrida, Foucault and Lacan, and of the postmodern cultural and social perspectives, images and practices that their theories inform. For the feminist egalitarianism that directly or indirectly inspired all participants to reject the traditional patriarchal role as the subjugated, objectified 'Other' and pursue contemporary ideals that promised access to public, male-dominated subjectivities and identities, assumed the wholly formed, material existence - and thus, the (social) constructibility - of real women. It was therefore not feminist ideals that drove the participants to slough off their essential sexual female selves and pursue a perfect, boyishly androgynous form and function(s) in order to be seen as constructible into subjectivity. Rather, it was the correlated *postmodernist* model of re-embodied (male) subjectivity that conceives real sexual woman as having no essence at all (Derrida, 1979), or that sees it *as* her essence to be the fluidly formless, unconstructible no-thing or "not all" (Lacan, 1982), the disgustingly natural, unbounded, uncontrollable body that is the very condition of postmodern man's sociolinguistic construction and existence as sole, phallically formed, inspired, imitated subject, creator, and (increasingly violent) controller of the symbolic order. With this postmodern obliteration of real, natural women, and its reduction of 'woman' and the feminine to phallic metaphor for 'dissimulation' or pretence, it is unsurprising that postmodern girls/women are spending exorbitant amounts of time, money and effort being 'made-up', or that (ever more youthful) surgically reconstructed, bionically mechanized, and cyber bodies are rendering unpalatable and really/symbolically non-existent, the *natural* sexual female body. Thus, when the adult *Gorgie* created and entered the imaginary world where she became *Peter Pan*, the eternal, always perfect boy, forever loved by the perfect mother, as a way of escaping the real, sexual womanly self that she equated with badness, disapproval, and non-existence, this can justifiably be interpreted as an escape from postmodern man's conception of the essential, sexual woman as without (*logical*) form, and thus, without order, control, goodness or existence. Similarly, when all participants strove to slough off, hide, purify, and/or punish their real sexual womanly selves in order to attain a persisting, recognizable, boyishly androgynous (or machine-like) form, and when some were forced to retreat

within to anorexically achieve that form, they were arguably reacting to the postmodern (textually inscribed) denial of an essential form and existence to that womanly self, and to its metaphoric reduction of 'woman' to masquerade, multiplicity and fluid undecidability.

For, in reclaiming the properties that Plato and Aristotle used to fixedly and materially define woman as the pure, immanent aspects of man's essential being - properties such as passivity, emotion, place, plurality, and fluidity - the re-embodied postmodern male subject has outdone the ancient Greeks in denying real women any material definition or existence whatsoever, by taking for himself the term 'woman' as metaphor for the veiled phallus/pen with and around which he constructs his embodied, subjectified self and (textual) world. In this way, even woman's traditionally *indirect* access to subjective existence, as (heterosexual) man's pure, appropriated, materially defined 'Other', has been denied, her real, material body now sacrificially dissected and dematerialized; its metaphorical parts (e.g. lips, vagina, hymen) used to textually construct Derridean/Foucauldian metrosexual man's femininely (re)embodied existence, its other parts hastily reassembled to imitate his (perfect) boyishly male form.<sup>87</sup> This postmodern interpretation of participants' experiences of the (de- and re-) construction of their subjectivity explains very clearly, then, why those who found themselves unable to construct or maintain the perfect, boyishly attractive and successful form/function demanded by the outer real/Symbolic Father, would withdraw to conduct their own anorexic/bulimic/orthorexic battle for the perfect form/function and thus the ongoing subjective existence granted by the inner father. Within the contemporary feminist/postmodernist infused symbolic order, there simply *is* no alternative form of subjective definition or existence available to those girls/women.

However, although it is the postmodern model of (male) subjectivity that I have argued here to be the contemporary context for and driving force behind the participants' development of eating and associated disorders, it is not postmodernist/poststructuralist theory that *originally* denied the essentially whole form and function(s) to real sexual woman, that she, in her subjective and symbolic non-existence, currently guarantees to men. Rather, the conception of the real sexual female (or womanly) self as de-formed, imperfect, undefinable and thus unknowable originated with the Platonic/Aristotelian

---

<sup>87</sup>This poststructuralist dissection and dematerialization of real woman, and the postmodern subject's metaphoric appropriation of her sexual parts is expressed in the wider culture through men's use of the term 'cunt', for example, as the most derogatory term one man could call another; also 'pussy', 'twat' etc., all implying his subjugated feminization. A woman's successful imitation of male subjectivity is recognized through her inclusion as a 'guy', 'mate', 'bro', 'buddy', or, as having 'balls'.

denial of a spirogenetic essence and essential *female* form; a denial that, in being reified within language and the binary logic that underpins it, created the metaphysical foundations and conceptual/linguistic means for the de(con)struction of all essentially whole, sexual female subjects since. Whilst this denial and deconstruction may have historically created the foundation for disorders such as *hysteria* and *depression*, my interpretation of the research data suggests that it is currently - and within the context of a poststructuralist denial of any fixed material existence whatsoever to real women - creating a fragmentation and loss of essential female subjectivity that, when other means to reunified subjective existence are denied, is resulting in eating and associated 'disorders'. If my interpretation is plausible, then the research indicates Plato, Aristotle, and those that followed to be mistaken: there is indeed a *spirogenetic female* essence, and an essentially formed, integrated, subjective female self that, through parental/social inscription with a metaphysics and language that denies its existence, is becoming split, fragmented and lost. The existence and loss of this essential self/form then explains the historical/contemporary (moralized) conception of the real sexual female self as de-formed, uncontrolled, and therefore needing to be repressively restrained and ideally re-formed if it is to survive.

For, with the loss of the *whole form* that ensured their (subjectively) unified, integrated, and thus *controlled* expression and satisfaction, essential needs, feelings and functions become disintegrated, uncontrolled and insatiable, and therefore perceived as bad, mad, and demonic. That is, as the wild, 'voraciously engulfing' female (desires) that must be consciously repressed, restrained and redirected (through reward or punishment) in order to construct and serve the (boyishly imitative) social/anorexic form and function(s) that will bring subjective recognition, love, and survival. Thus, within this pretend form/self, the essential need for unconditional (inter-subjective) existence, recognition and love is repressively replaced and sublimated by the existential need to *control* one's self and surroundings, and to re-form that self in a way that pleases - and thus gains subjective identity and existence from - the outer/inner Father(s). But, because this conditional approval and existence is always a poor, uncertain, and thus, ever more arduously and graspingly attained substitute for the essential, but now unsatisfiable need, it can only ever be unstable and unfulfilling, thus creating the feelings of loss, emptiness, fear, anxiety and addiction (to work, exercise, success, etc.) experienced by participants. Hence the persisting need to privately punish (through OCDs), sometimes reward (through binges), and thus purifyingly control, re-form and sustain the subsisting, demonically desirous

woman, not only to ensure conditional existence, but also in the hope of one day reclaiming, reintegrating and thus, freely expressing (and being unconditionally loved for) her essentially whole female form, needs, feelings and functions. And, because this essential female self was originally - and even in its fragmentation and disguise - experienced as an inextricably immaterial (mind) and material (genes) mind-body/head self, the essential form that Plato/Aristotle perceived as immaterial, and Derrida/Foucault as material, can justifiably be seen as an individual, sex and species-specific, *spirogenetic* essence/form. On this basis, it seems that the research results have supported and further clarified the hypothesis of a spirogenetic essence and essentially whole, subjective, essentio-socially constructed, female self, the metaphysical denial and socio-linguistic (de)construction of which is creating in girls/women a state of existential (di)stress relieved through the reconstruction of a socially/transcendentally or anorexically perfected self, as forms of survival of that essential self. This interpretation of the research results as confirming the hypothesis now permits an analysis of the ways in which this metaphysical/essence model of eating disorders may concur with and/or differ from the biomedical, psychological, (feminist) cultural, and psychoanalytic approaches outlined in Chapter 4.

#### **Situating the Metaphysical/Essence Theory of Eating Disorders**

As postulated in Chapter 4, it appears that an essence-based, paternal/social de- and re-constructionist approach that conceives eating disorders as a means of *survival* then permits a reinterpretation of features previously seen as causally related to these disorders as *symptoms* of the prior fragmentation of, and thus, the existential need to consciously control, desexualize, punish, purify and re-form, the (bad) essential, sexual female self. In this way, the metaphysical/essence theory not only provides cohesive explanation for contemporary occurrences of eating disorders (including the only relatively recently diagnosed *bulimia/orthorexia*), but also permits correlation of these occurrences with historical accounts of the mystical *anorexia* of 18<sup>th</sup> century ‘fasting girls’, and the ‘holy *anorexia*’ of saintly medieval women like Catherine of Siena.

As outlined in Chapter 4, *anorexia* has variously (and chronologically) been described as: a disorder of the nervous system (Gull); a gastric disorder caused by intrafamilial conflict (Lasègue); a science/equality induced “neurasthenia” or nervous exhaustion (Playfair); a

disruption of psychosexual development due to repressed sexual fears/desires (Freud); a repudiation of normal heterosexual womanhood, a fear of fatness, and a deficient and externally controlled sense of self (Bruch); an over-conforming embracement of feminine ideals and stereotypes (Boskind-Lodahl); a protesting and rejection of confusing and contradictory ideals of femininity (Orbach, Bordo, Grosz); a cultural and discursive construction (Malson); and a genetic/neurobiological disorder (Insel). However, the evidence presented above for the existence of a spirogenetically essential female self, the metaphysical/symbolic deconstruction of which is causing a fragmentary loss of its wholly integrated form, functions, needs, feelings, and even existence, not only allows these seemingly disparate causal interpretations to be united and reinterpreted as *symptoms* of existential *distress*. It also refigures the biomedical, psychological, (feminist) psychoanalytic and socio-cultural discourses that have characterized *anorexia* in these ways as themselves constructing, inscribing, and thus *perpetuating* the metaphysical basis for its occurrence, and, as such, acting as *pathogens* in the de(con)structive process leading to *anorexia*'s preservative manifestation. But in doing so, this metaphysical/essence model also resituates the pathological disorder, not with the occurrence of *anorexia*, but with the socially and discursively imposed de-formation and fragmentation of the essential sexual female self, and thus, the state of existential (*di*)*stress* created in Western(ized) girls/women who, in a postmodern world, daily face and strive to avert their own subjective, material, and symbolic non-existence. For it is this denigration and loss of essentially whole selfhood, and the resulting dis-integrated, disorganized, alienated state of mind and body that creates the fear, anxiety, depression, anger, and their uncontrolled, seemingly neurotic outbursts that then must - and can only - be contained, controlled and subdued through the construction of a paternally prescribed ideal self/form. A perfect pretend self that may now be seen as a *prophylaxis* - a form of mass medication - against the metaphysically based, paternally imposed, pathological *fragmentation* wrought by the symbolic inscription of the essential (sexual) female self as deformed, imperfect, uncontrolled, dirty, shameful, and bad. But, while these feelings may be successfully and repressively controlled and subdued, they may also subliminally act to undermine the reiterated form and performance of that pretend self through a constant fear of its failure, shattering, and thus, exposure of (and reduction to) the demonically desiring *woman* - the veiled 'evil-Eve' - subsisting beneath. This paternally prescribed prophylactic 'form' of subjective existence necessarily pursued and maintained by the postmodern girl/woman can therefore be seen as an uncertain, fear-driven, frenetic form of survival that, in its

actual or threatened disintegration, may bring her withdrawal into an inner, imaginary world to anorexically prescribe, measure, and administer her own purifying, punishing, desexualizing medicine - her own prophylactic 'form' of goodness and survival - to her ailing, ever-evil sexual female self: the 'real me'.

This resituation of the pathological state of disorder with the paternal/socially imposed fragmentation and loss of the essential female self, a disorder internally treated and controlled by the anorexic girl/woman in order to re-form, reorganize, and thus assist its survival, permits a reinterpretation and integration of the current biomedical, psychological, psychoanalytic, and social theories of eating disorders, as outlined above. For example, the Freudian view of (so-called) normal psychosexual development that views the aggressive sexual libido as primary and as the motivator of the bodily drives and desires that, through their repetitive imprinting, give rise to the conscious/unconscious mind and thus the subjective self (-image), now re-presents as a *secondary* and destructive stage in that process of development. For the *primary* stage is the self-motivated existence and development of the essentially whole, spirogenetically integrated (subjective) being, whose primary need is for unconditional maternal recognition and love; a need that, if satisfied, brings the satisfaction of all other physical and emotional needs, and the gradual development, within that primary, inter-subjective bond, of the wholly autonomous, but also always intuitively and empathetically connected, fe/male self.<sup>88</sup> It is paternal intervention that teaches the child to reconceive the real mother as the dual 'other'; that is, as the castrated, submissive - but also potentially uncontrollable - *object* of masculine desire, thereby initiating the breaking of the mother/child bond of intersubjective recognition/love, and its gradual transformation into sadomasochistic bonds of (masculine) dominance and (feminine) subjugation. In this way, the boy's essential need for unconditional recognition/love is reshaped into a (femininely subordinate) desire for the conditional recognition, disciplinary love and approval of the father, this submissive desire then heteronormatively sublimated as the aggressive libidinal desire to dominate, appropriate and consume the feminine 'other', thereby constructing and consolidating his phallically fixed, formed and privileged subjectivity. Having constructed this paternally and socially approved phallic (hetero-)subjectivity, the (perfect) male subject is assured of

---

<sup>88</sup>This reinterpretation of the Freudian libidinal development/emergence of mind from body as secondary to and destructive of an already subjective spirogenetic self is also supported by psychological research findings that the foetus is consciously acting, and perceiving and interacting with its environment, from early gestation (Chamberlain, 1998).

the intersubjective recognition and love of the father, and thus, of his enduring place within the symbolic order.

For the girl, the essential need for, and (maternal) bond of, unconditional, inter-subjective recognition/love is also reshaped into a desire to please or be punished, and thus be loved by, the paternal subject. This (conditional) love may be achieved while the girl has a childish/boyish form. But with the onset of sexual development, a stage Freud (1953) identified as involving a shift from active (clitoral) to passive (vaginal) sexuality, all trace of essentially whole, loved, subjective existence is lost as the girl comes to see her *sexual* female self as de-formed, fluidly uncontrollable and bad, and therefore to be visibly restrained, repressed or masochistically punished in order to meet the (objectifying) feminine ideals ensuring phallic definition and existence through her father/husband. It is this repressive *loss* of subjective female selfhood (and its essential form, function, and unconditional love), a loss that the metaphysical/essence model identifies as generally *pathological*, that Freud views as the repressive origin and condition of the *normal*, psychosexually mature, female ego or self, a self characterized by penis envy and sexual neuroses that, in relieving the fears and anxieties associated with forbidden, repressed, screened fantasies and desires, maintain the supposedly stable, sane existence of that self.

That this development and existence of sane, sexually mature womanhood should depend upon the neurotic expression of fears, guilts and anxieties associated with supposedly natural, instinctive, but paternally forbidden and thus repressively controlled (sexual) desires and fantasies makes sense only if that womanhood is reinterpreted as a (prophylactic) *pretend* or 'screened' self objectively (re)constructed, projected, and defined in self-repressively 'proper' and thus pleasing opposition to the paternal male subject. For these (id) instincts and desires that Freud sees as innately sexually aggressive, uncontrolled, and thus needing to be repressively controlled, were *not* so prior to paternal intervention and the imposition of expectations and ideals of femininity that initiated - and that participants experienced as - a fragmentation and loss of wholly integrated and freely expressed selfhood. What arguably *made* these instincts and desires aggressive, uncontrolled, and sexual, then, was their dis-integrated separation from the originally, essentially whole female self, the repression of that (demonic) self and its now insatiable needs and impulses, and the reshaping of the *essential* need for unconditional recognition/love into a masochistically self-denying, *existential* need to be the ideally

pleasing sexual object - or imitator - of the father's phallic gaze, desire and control. In this case, the Freudian notion of normal, stable, psychosexually developed womanhood is actually the reconstructed, constantly reiterated, prophylactic self - a false, projected, commodified self with a worth based on *looks* and *utility* that is always overshadowed and undermined by the fear of failure, a shattering of that self, and reduction to symbolic non-existence. Thus, the fear-releasing *neuroses* that Freud described as a sexually motivated aspect of normal, well-adjusted selfhood are, in this understanding, expressing the pathogenically constructed fear of exposure of, and reduction to, the de-formed, real-ly diabolical, womanly self, and her unbounded, hellishly unsatisfiable desires. If this is the case, then it becomes possible to reinterpret the *hysterical neurosis* that Freud identified in Victorian women, not as an isolated pathological and somatic expression of the repressed fears/anxieties attached to forbidden sexual desires and fantasies (thus permitting a return to 'normal' womanhood), but as a *survival response* to the feared or real failure to attain or maintain the traditionally ideal qualities of the perfectly 'finished', restrained, passively subservient, feminine '(m)other'. In other words, an overwhelming fear of a shattering of the façade of feminine perfection (the *Doll*) and exposure of the "devouring, insatiable female" (Bordo, 1993, p. 161) beneath, that forces a retreat from social constraints and expectations, and the hysterically redemptive immobilization of that demonic self and her desires (causing fainting and paralysis), sporadically interrupted by enraged outbursts of that self (expressed as 'madness' and convulsions). In this way, Freudian *hysteria* presents and aligns itself alongside *anorexia* as a self-prescribed, self-screening *prophylaxis* that ensures the subjective survival of the fragmented, repressed, and barely-subsisting, sexual female self. The difference being that *hysteria* reacts to the Platonic/Cartesian conception and definition of woman as the immanent, objectified 'Other', whereas *anorexia* reacts to the poststructuralist (male) reclamation of that otherness, leaving postmodern women with no other means to defined, subjective existence but to do as Plato advised, and strive to "become a man" (*Timaeus*, 90e). Both so-called disorders can therefore be reinterpreted as a *survival response* to the metaphysically based, paternally imposed, pathological fragmentation of the spirogenetically whole female self, and the consequent psycho/somatic state of numbed, disordered, uncontrollable *fluidity* that portends real, psychic, and symbolic non-existence.





Figure 31:

(Kayla)

Thus, when Freud relates *anorexia* to childhood sexual abuse - a relation supported by current statistics (and this research) indicating that (at least) 50-60% of anorectics have suffered significant physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse - that abuse can be reinterpreted as just part of the overall familial/socially imposed denial, pejorative sexual fragmentation, and thus (repressive) loss of the essential female self. In exacerbating this loss by magnifying the dirtiness, badness, guilt, shame, and secrecy that is already inscribed onto the sexual female self/body, the abuse renders the socially constructed, prophylactic self even less tenable, thus increasing the possibility of anorexic/bulimic withdrawal. Hence, when Freud described *anorexia* as “a melancholia where sexuality is undeveloped”, he was correct; but the *melancholia* is for the lost child self, and the unconditional recognition and love of that self. This metaphysical incorporation and reinterpretation of the Freudian model of psychosexual development and associated hysterical and anorexic (dis)orders can now be applied to feminist psychoanalytic and cultural approaches.

For, when Luce Irigaray (1991, p. 108) interprets the Freudian/Lacanian model of psychosexual development as a failure of the child to separate from her mother, and thus, to construct the self-limiting boundaries necessary for autonomous, sensibly transcendent, sexually differentiated subjectivity, and when Irigaray (ibid. p. 55) continues to associate

embodied female subjectivity with fluidity, multiplicity, and the absence of an essentially fixed, whole *form*, she too denies the prior existence of an essential (spirogenetic) female self. But, in doing so, she overlooks the possibility that the base, uncontrolled, animalistic bodily instincts and drives that she sees as needing to be (via breath control) conquered and cultivated into (divine) subjectivity, may actually be the de-formed, dissociated remains of that original self (-concept). And, therefore, that the self-constructed, symbolically mediated *limits* of transcendent female subjectivity, the lack of which she perceives (says Whitford) as “a source of pathology and dereliction” (ibid. p. 77), a source of *hysteria*, may actually be the falsely constructed and incomplete limits of a therefore always fluidly shifting, unstable and undefinable subjectivity, that, as such, may produce the (fear of) fragmentation that results in *anorexia* and associated disorders. If this is the case, then Shepherdson’s Irigarayan interpretation of *anorexia* as somatically presenting the unspeakable question - ‘Am I a man or a woman?’ - is mistaken. This is the question posed by *hysteria*, not *anorexia*, since the hysteric has a choice: she can identify with man, *or* be his oppositely and fixedly defined material property, woman. The anorectic, however, has no such choice, since, for her, the term ‘woman’ means nothingness; a state of non-existence that only the daily renewed attainment of paternally bestowed, male-imitative subjectivity can avert. Thus, the question daily, silently, and more urgently posed by the anorexic self is - “Do I still exist?” - her ever more clearly defined, purified bones answering in the affirmative. But the resolution for both *hysteria* and *anorexia* remains the same: the return to this girl/woman of her original, essentially whole female form and function. Because Irigaray denies the existence of this ordinary essence, she leaves real woman in the (pathological) metaphysical state of fluid unconstructibility and symbolic non-existence to which she was consigned by poststructuralist (male) theorists.

This metaphysically based psychoanalytic understanding of eating disorders as an inner means of surviving a general pathological loss of essential female selfhood then permits the integration of this approach with the feminist cultural approaches of Orbach and Bordo. Both interpret *anorexia* as an unconscious form of feminist *protest* (through exaggeration) of feminine ideals that, in demanding *slimness* as a sign of beauty, purity, youth and the submissive desire to please, but also of autonomy and self-control, are contradictory, confusing, and unattainable. Bordo therefore groups *anorexia* with *hysteria* and *agoraphobia*, describing them as “pathologies of female protest” (1993, p. 159), in which the anorectic resists these ideals, and flees the corresponding archetypal image of the evil,

devouring female, by taking the pursuit of slimness to its extreme, starving away her female body to become the perfectly pure, transcendent (male) mind; that is, to become and remain a boy, thereby escaping womanhood. Whilst Orbach also sees *anorexia* as a form of protest, it is not just confusing feminine ideals that it is protesting (via “hunger strike”), but also the inability to attain these ideals in a public sphere that perpetuates women’s inequality and demands (slimmed) compliance with masculinist values. However, although expressing a desire for autonomy, *anorexia* actually results in extreme separation of self from body, and prevents separation from the mother, thus *precluding* autonomous selfhood. While the metaphysical model relates *anorexia* to a rejection of traditional femininity, confusion at contemporary ideals, and escape from the demonic female body, in recognizing what Orbach and Bordo’s poststructuralist models deny (an essential female self that, with sexualization, becomes the demonic female), this model requires the distinguishing of *hysteria* from *anorexia*, and the refiguring of pathology and protest as *prior* to and part of the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for the occurrence of *anorexia*. For, contrary to these cultural theories, the research results indicate the original site of pathology to be with the pejorative sexual fragmentation and objectification of this essentially whole self (-concept), and the consequent post-feminist, postmodern need to pursue imitative entry into the still male-dominated realm of phallically bi-gendered subjectivities and identities. And this entry required the attainment of an ideal form that was experienced as contradictory and confusing only because it was false and required alienation, not from the female *body*, but from the essential (demonically sexual) female *self*. By making subjective existence, recognition, and love conditional upon the attainment of this ideal form, this imitative subjectivity ensures a state of parental/social dependency for *all* (postmodern) girls/women that, with a failure to maintain ideals, may shift to an *inner* anorexic dependency on the ability to desexualize, purify, and thus sufficiently *re-form* that demonic self. On this understanding, it is not *body* image (and fatness) that is the anorectic’s focus, but her essential sexual female *self* (-concept), and the existential need to remove all trace of her (imperfect, bad) sexual female parts and achieve a perfectly boyish, childlike, or even machine-like self/form. Thus, *anorexia* does not protest, but *relinquishes* the pursuit of social ideals. This understanding then permits correlation of *anorexia* with *bulimia*, *orthorexia* and *obesity*, all of these ‘disorders’ being similarly reinterpreted as an inner battle to desexualize, defeminize, discipline, punish, and thus purify, re-form, and protect the essential sexual female self/body, in the private pursuit of goodness and subjective survival. In this way, the

metaphysical model incorporates Bruch's association of *anorexia* with *obesity*, whilst reinterpreting her perceptions of *anorexia* as arising from body image distortion due to fear of fatness, a detachment from bodily sensations, a deficit in autonomy, and "various symbolic misinterpretations of the eating function" (1974, p. 236) as unified in their motivation by a very rational fear of the development of the (bad) sexual female self that signifies imminent subjective and symbolic death.

But this fear and the (causal) features that Bruch attributes to *anorexia* can only be cohesively related and explained in relation to other eating disorders if they are identified in the first place with the initial fragmentation and loss of the essential sexual self, and (re)construction of the ideal-based, prophylactic *pretend* self. For, in this case, fatness and food consumption represent a visible and dis-integrated expression of the bad, fragmented, uncontrolled sexual self that must be constantly and noticeably restrained, purified, and repressively erased if that seemingly unified, controlled, hopefully perfect, *pretend* self is to be sustained, and paternally approved (subjective) existence attained. The young girl therefore learns from her mother to resignify and utilize food as a tool of self-denial, control, punishment, purification, and desexualizing reconstruction of the impure, dis-integrated, sexual female self/body. But with this loss and false reconstruction(s) of the essential self comes alienation from her feelings, desires, emotions and intuitions, as they are repressively hidden or reconfigured according to the desires and expectations of the real, social, and/or transcendent Father, thereby producing in the developing girl the sense of detachment, lack of autonomy, and externally imposed control that Bruch associates with *anorexia*. However, it is only with the failure to attain or maintain feminine ideals, and thus, the lack of socially approved, self-reconstructive means to attain and exhibit the self-disciplined, boyishly attractive, paternally approved form, that a girl/woman may have little choice but to use food and body shape as the *socially disapproved*, self-destructive, anorexic means and measure of desexualizing purification and re-formation of the 'deformed' sexual female self. Hence, while the anorectic continues to perceive her essential sexual self through the pejorative, annihilating gaze of the real/social father, and may thus judge the goodness of her pretend self through the (punitive, self-destructive) standards of an *inner* demonic father, thereby compromising her autonomy (as Bruch suggests), she nevertheless gains a sense of *control* over her self, her goodness, and thus, her subjective existence, that, as the socially reconstructed self, she did not have. It is only when this

control is taken from her, and/or all other (non-destructive) means to a good, loved subjective existence denied, that real or psychic/psychotic death may ensue.

Thus, having utilized the metaphysical/essence model of eating disorders to incorporate and reinterpret current psychoanalytic, cultural, and psychological models, it remains now to account for the *biomedical* genetic and hormonal approaches, the final synthesis then permitting explanation of both *historical* and increasing *contemporary* and *cross-cultural* occurrences of these ‘disorders’ - now reinterpreted as ‘re-ordering’ means of survival of the subjective self. For, if, under the metaphysical model, the original pathology is situated with the reconception of the essential sexual female self as demonically de-formed, uncontrollable, and potentially non-existent, and thus needing to be hastily buried beneath a socially *or* anorexically reconstructed, pretend self as its prophylactic ‘form’ of survival, then this model recognizes a genetic/inheritable component to *anorexia*, but only for the following reasons. Firstly, it is the *parents* that (through a perceptual shift) initiate and transmit this fragmentary loss of essential selfhood, as the daughter learns to perceive and reconceive her mother and thus her sexual female self as de-formed, uncontrollable, and thus male-dependent, and therefore needing to please the real/social/transcendent father by reshaping and thus escaping that self. And secondly, the breaking of the bonds of unconditional, maternal recognition and love (of the essential self), and the abuse-fuelled failure to gain paternal/social approval and love that created in the ED participants a sense of fear, distress, anxiety, worthlessness, abandonment, and futility, have in recent studies been shown to cause genetic/neural dysfunction in, and reduction of, certain regions of the brain. For example, in studying the brains of suicide subjects who had been severely neglected and/or abused in childhood, McGowan, Sasaki, Huang, Unterberger, Suderman ...Szyf (2008) found impaired gene expression and therefore neural dysfunction in the *hippocampus* (the region encoding memories) that, in an earlier study of similarly (maternally) deprived and thus fearful, neurotic, stressed rats, increased the production of stress hormones.<sup>89</sup> It seems plausible to suggest, therefore, that the genetic, neural, and hormonal dysfunctions biomedically associated with *anorexia* may be symptomatic of a prior (Paternally/abuse driven) loss of (inter)subjective existence, construction, recognition and love of the (essential) self, symptoms that *anorexia* attempts to relieve through its recrafting of a perfectly reformed, recognizable, lovable subjective self. And, in adversely

---

<sup>89</sup>See pages 59 and 100 for references to other epigenetic research linking parental influence to genetic dysfunction.

affecting the brain, this loss of essential selfhood may also be expected to produce hormonal, menstrual, and other physiological irregularities, both in the anorexic *and* the supposedly normal (but false, conditionally existent) self/body, thus explaining the increasing incidence of fear/stress/anxiety-related disorders (and associated higher levels of stress hormones) in contemporary Western girls/women - including hypertension, obesity, coronary disease, cancers, and food/air allergies.<sup>90</sup>

In addition, the often traumatic loss of unconditional, inter-subjective existence, recognition and love of the essential self, along with the fear, stress and anxiety around constructing and maintaining a perfect pretend self, would explain the low levels of neurotransmitter hormones such as *dopamine*, *serotonin*, and *oxytocin* (and the elevated levels of stress-related *glutamate*) found in depressed, stressed, anorexic, and obsessive-compulsive girls/women. For, as noted in Chapter 4, the production of these pleasure-based neurotransmitters has been associated with the satisfaction of needs for (maternal) recognition, love, affection, food and laughter, and if these needs are repressed, or reshaped and deployed in the pursuit of conditional approval and existence, then they cannot be satisfied, causing hormonal/neurotransmitter levels to become depressed.<sup>91</sup> But, for both the social and the anorexic (prophylactic) selves, what *will* increase the levels of the pleasure-based hormones and neurotransmitters is a daily measure of success in the disciplined (masochistic) achievement of the ideal, male-imitating form and function(s), and thus, the *daemonic* approval ensuring ongoing existence of the suitably desexualized, dewomanized, boyishly perfected female subject. Hence the addictive nature of the anorexic *Kerry's* periods of starvation that, after a certain time, would produce an endorphinic 'high' signalling a further erasure of, and escape from, the weakly feminine, or demonically uncontrolled (non-existent) womanly self/body, and thus, an albeit temporary lowering of fear, anxiety, and stress-related hormones and responses. And also, the obsessive nature of *Cilla's* post-bulimic, socially reconstructed self's drive for achievement and recognition within her workplace, along with her addictive need to visibly purify and punish the still sub-sisting (dirty, bad) sexual self through ritual cleansing and painful, bloodied nail-biting; both pursuits delivering a measure of goodness,

---

<sup>90</sup> Research indicating an increasing incidence of stress-related physiological and mental disorders within contemporary American women, and their higher levels in women as compared to men, can be found in Juliet Schor's *The Overworked American* (1993); Elder, Gullion, Funk, DeBar, Lindberg & Stevens (2011); Schulte (2011).

<sup>91</sup> See page 151.

reassurance of ongoing subjective existence, and thus, a tranquillizing “release” from anxiety, to the prophylactic self.

This metaphysical/essence model of eating disorders may therefore explain and resituate their *neurological* interpretation as being due to a dysfunction in the *limbic* (or *hypothalamic*) region of the brain, the centre associated with emotions, (food/tactile/sexual) appetites, and the (satiated) production and regulation of *dopamine*, *serotonin* and *oxytocin*. For, with the repressive loss of the spirogenetically integrated form and function of the essential self, it can be expected that the functions (and even form) of the limbic system would also become dis-integrated, depressed and reshaped, with once unconsciously integrated emotional and physical needs, appetites, and modes/feelings of satisfaction and pleasure being psychosomatically reconstructed and (re)pressed into the service of the pretend *prophylactic* self and its pursuit of the ideal form/function. For *this* self, it is no longer the satisfaction of bodily appetites that will cause a release of pleasure hormones, but their *denial*, as she strives for success in attaining paternal ideals and approval. It is this success that now fires the limbic system into producing feelings of satisfaction and pleasure, and that, if denied, motivates a retreat from social into *anorexic* pursuit of the perfect form, success here bringing the required limbic response. By its very nature, however, the anorectic’s pursuit of the perfect, lovable form (and associated feelings of pleasure) must also cause physiological changes in the brain/limbic system (and other organs), as she starves to erase and escape her dirty, bad, de-formed, sexual female self/body. It might be expected, therefore, that the degree of physiological disintegration will reflect the degree of dirtiness, badness, shame and/or disdain that the anorexic girl/woman has come to associate with her sexual female self, an inability to escape that badness ultimately resulting in loss of hope and somatic failure. Or, as Sunshine experienced and described it:

I’d start getting flushes and dizzy spells, and it was like I was losing control of my....Your body just can’t cope with the failure of never going to be...the realization that you’re never going to get there.... you try and be good, but you’re never going to be good enough.... you can’t function, therefore your body gives out, you just can’t be yourself.



Figure 32: (Kayla)

---

Thus, for the anorexic/bulimic girl, detached from and denying the needs, desires, feelings, and even the existence of her real, evil sexual female self/body in the pursuit of goodness, it is not just the *limbic* system but the *heart* and all other spirogenetic parts and functions that are reshaped and reduced - or even stopped, if the battle to escape their shameful, painful badness and become a whole, lovable self again, seems lost.

But, because the conditional approval and love of the real/social/d(a)emonic father is only ever a poor and iterative substitute for the unconditional, intersubjective mother/child bond that is the most essential need, the mind, head and body of both the anorexically and socially reconstructed selves remain in a state of depressed, deprived, obsessive, addictive, and melancholic longing for that essential, but now lost maternal recognition and love of the originally perfect child self. It is this metaphysical/essential reinterpretation of the physiological and neurological aspects of eating disorders that then permits incorporation and reinterpretation of the final pieces of the puzzle: the historical cases of “*anorexia mirabilis*” identified in 19<sup>th</sup> century Europe’s ‘fasting girls’, the “*holy anorexia*” of saintly medieval Christian women, and contemporary Western and cross-cultural increases in cases of not only *anorexia*, but also *bulimia*, *orthorexia* and *obesity*.

The holy anorectics and the fasting girls also faced the prospect of demonic de-formation and symbolic non-existence associated with possession of a sexually developing female



body, and, desperate to escape this pathological destruction of the subjective self, also sought imitative access to the Phallic Order of transcendent subjectivities and identities - perhaps the only form of subjectivity available to them in those pre-egalitarian times. But this access was dependent upon meeting the ideals and thus gaining the recognition and approval of the familial, mystical and/or religious Father; ideals that required, not the boyishly slim, restrained, sexually attractive form demanded by contemporary social ideals, but a boyishly pure, virginal form that, transcending the demonic desires of the sexual female self/body, was worthy to receive the phallic Word (and flesh) of the supernatural Father, and thus ultimately become divinely disembodied (male) spirit: the flesh made Word. And the only means available for attainment of this boyish form was the self-destructive weapon of purifying, mortifying, desexualizing, defeminizing *self-starvation*, a tool of reformation that, if seen as *divinely* inspired, brought provisional, imitative access to transcendent subjectivity, but that, if seen as *demonically* inspired, meant madness and symbolic death. Therefore, with no other form of recognized, loved subjective existence available, for the holy/mystical girl, *real* death as a transcendently or anorexically perfect subject may have been preferable to the *psychic* death inflicted by traditional (male possessed) femininity, or its counterpart, the wildly unbounded (demonically possessed) essential female self. Thus incorporated and reinterpreted within the metaphysical model of essential/reconstructed subjectivities, this mystical and religious reformation of the (bad) essential sexual female self as the (boyishly) perfect, ultimately transcendent subject is similarly reflected in the *prophylactic* selves created by my research participants. That is, in *Kerry's* concept of her good anorexic/academic self as a head/mind on a trolley; *Jean's* concept of her core (astrological) self as a masculine 'head' self; *Gwen's* concept of her good, boyish self as clothed in the armour of God; *Gorgie's* conception of her good, orthorexic self as the always perfect (supernatural) boy, *Peter Pan*; *Miss P's* conception of her perfect anorexic self as *Dorothy*, flying free of her imperfect, pubertal female body and over the rainbow; *Fleur's* concept of her good, socially acceptable self as a disembodied, desensitized robot; *Sunshine's* conception of her good anorexic self as a person with a number of bony parts; *Cilla's* concept of her good bulimic/obsessive self as cleansed of its dirty sexual parts in the quest for social/spiritual perfection; *Gina's* concept of her good spiritual self as a desexualized, disembodied intellect; and finally, *Lewie's* artistic concept of her ideal self as the young 'chimney-sweep', the always perfect, boyishly non-gendered child.

In this understanding, historic and contemporary modes of transcendentally and anorexically attained subjectivity are united in depending and drawing for their existence upon the ideals, approval and love of an *immaterial* father, whether that be God, daemon, or the inner voice (the 'super-ego') demanding abstinence of the (imperfect) daughter. Ideals that, in redemptively demanding a desexualized, defeminized, boyish, and ultimately disembodied form, promise and protect a form of subjectivity that averts the (social) sexual objectification, penetration, and thus annihilation of the prophylactic self. In other words, for the transcendent (outer/inner) Father, sexual attractiveness is not a requirement for subjectivity. Rather, it is the reductive *changes* in appearance/size - signalling the mortifying, purifying erasure of the bad sexual female self/body and the defeminizing *achievement* of a (hetero)sexually *unattractive*, diminished, and therefore redeemed childish/boyish form - that please the Father, therefore achieving and sustaining (as well as protecting from violating dispossession) the subjectivity of the transcendent/anorexic self.



Figure 33:

(Kayla)

Thus, in a reversal of the spirogenetic construction and functioning of the originally integrated self, visibly self-mortified frailty, diminution, and unattractiveness are what gratify the transcendent (prophylactic) self, thereby increasing neural secretions of pleasure-inducing *dopamine*, *serotonin* and *endorphins* from its depressed, dysfunctional

limbic system, and reducing stress-related *glutamate* secretions. This metaphysical reinterpretation - and thus correlation - of historical and contemporary forms of transcendent and anorexic subjectivity, along with the resituation of their psychological/physiological causes as *symptoms* of a prior pathology (the loss of essential selfhood), now allows reinterpretation and explanation of a seemingly contradictory feature noted in both historic and contemporary cases of *anorexia*: the absence/presence of hunger. While *Freudian* theory characterized *anorexia* as the *absence* of hunger (due to a fear of oral impregnation or other repressed sexual fantasies), and while *biomedical* theory later linked this absence to neurological dysfunction, other *psychological/cultural* theories have contradictorily characterized *anorexia* as the enduring *suppression* of a therefore voracious hunger. The *metaphysical* model, however, recognizes both the presence *and* absence of hunger as features of the anorexically reconceived and reconstructed prophylactic self, as she strives to avert subjective non-existence.

For the holy anorectic, the mystical fasting girl, and the postmodern anorectic desperately striving to escape their own (bad, deformed) sexual female self/body and thus attain or retain an ideal, boyishly/childishly embodied subjectivity, the subjective experience and denial of bodily appetites is initially a source of self-control, (desexualizing) purification, punishment, goodness, and thus, of addictive, hormonally related pleasure (and stress relief) in pursuing these ideals. However, if her 'badness' seems inescapable (due to sexual/incestuous abuse, guilt and shame, for example), then total body transcendence may be required for the construction of the good prophylactic self, in which case, bodily needs, appetites and functions may no longer register with its mind/brain. For the transcendent/anorectic self who has reconceived her redeemed self as a head/mind on a trolley, for example, there may be no conscious awareness of bodily sensations, hunger, or even of the body itself, limbic pleasure now derived, not from the suppression and denial, but from the *absence* of that voracious hunger that signals transcendence of and escape from the demonically desiring, sexual womanly self. Finally she has achieved the perfect boyish/childish *form* that assures self/paternal approval, recognition, love, and thus, (albeit provisional, imitative) subjective existence to the anorexic self. Having thus accounted for and reinterpreted the various approaches to (historical and contemporary cases of) *anorexia*, it is now possible to employ the metaphysical/essence model to explain the recent increase in prevalence and incidence of all eating disorders, within both Western

and non-Western cultures (Talleyrand, 2006, Efron, 2008), and across divisions of class and sex.

Characterizing *anorexia* as a result of a loss of essentially subjective selfhood, a (post-feminist) rejection of traditional (objectifying) feminine ideals, followed by a failure to attain or maintain (imitative) access to the postmodern symbolic realm of phallic subjectivities and identities, explains the only recent spread of *anorexia* into classes and cultures where traditional feminine ideals have persisted, but where isolated individuals or groups have (like the holy anorectics) rejected them in favour of male-imitative subjectivities. Such was the case with (cousins) *Fleur* and *Gorgie*, who rejected the oppressive feminine ideals passed down by their Māori mother and father respectively - ideals that saw their great great grandmother, a Māori princess, gifted by her Maniapoto tribe to northern Māori as a peace-making gesture, and that had permitted the incestuous abuse of Fleur's mother and Gorgie - instead pursuing the seemingly liberatory opportunities offered to them by (middle-class) Pākeha culture. What both found, however, was that both cultures shared the same underlying concept of the sexual female self/body as dirty, bad, and shameful, an inherited conception that ultimately undermined their ability to reconstruct an enduring, paternally/socially approved, subjective (Pākeha) self; Fleur constantly shifting (identities), Gorgie turning to *orthorexia*, and both ultimately opting for marriage as an indirect but safer path to a phallically ensured subjective existence. For both, the postmodern promise of fully embodied subjectivity for all forms of difference had revealed itself to be reserved only for those with (phallic) male bodies, with even limited subjectivity denied to those unable to escape their demonic femaleness. On this understanding, it becomes possible to surmise that the recent occurrences of *anorexia* in postmodern boys/men may be expressing a similar inability to escape what they have (perhaps through abuse or homosexuality) come to see as their own demonically castrated, de-formed, feminized sexual self/body, and the consequent inability to gain access to phallic subjectivities and identities. For, in a postmodern world, like real sexual woman, the deformed, feminized man comes face-to-face with his own material and symbolic non-existence, *anorexia* offering an inner retreat and form of survival to his essential male self.

Having begun this chapter with a summary of the research results presented in Chapter 5, I then thematically interpreted the results, finding strong support for the hypothesized existence of an original *spirogenetic* essence and essential female self, the metaphysically

based, parentally/socially/discursively imposed denial, (sexual) demonization and deconstruction of which is causing its pathological fragmentation and loss, and thus, the existential need to reconstruct a paternally prescribed ideal self as a *prophylactic* form of survival. In these post-feminist, postmodern times, this ideal is a boyishly subjectified self/form based on ever more stringent, bi-gendered ideals of *appearance* and *achievement*, and the (fear of) failure to attain or maintain this pretend (and thus unstable, unsatisfied) self is producing a state of existential (di)stress that is resulting in eating and associated (depressive, obsessive, addictive) disorders, as an inner battle to control, purify, re-form, and thus, sustain, the essential (but fragmented, demonic) sexual female self. I then showed how this metaphysical/essence model permits incorporation and reinterpretation of the various biomedical, psychological, (feminist) psychoanalytic and cultural approaches to eating (dis)orders as not only describing the *symptoms* of, but also acting as *pathogens* in the prior and pathological denial and de-formation of the essential female self, and thus, in creating the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for these disorders to occur. In this way, the metaphysical/essence model permitted and explained a correlation of *anorexia* not only with other contemporary eating and associated disorders, but also with its historical manifestations. Because I have located the origin of these forms of (dis)order in the Platonic/Aristotelian denial of a spirogenetic essence and an essential female self, a denial that sparked a trail of illogical misconceptions of both essence *and* woman, it remains now to relate the outcome of the research - its support for the existence of a sexed 'spirogenetic' essence, and thus, for a metaphysical model of the (mal)development of the essential female self and associated mental disorders - to the historical (mis)conceptions of essence (and essential subjectivity) outlined in Chapter 3.





### **Section III: Reconceptions of Essence, Subjectivity and Metaphysics**

#### **Chapter 7**

##### ***A Sexed, Spirogenetic Model***

If there is an originary, knowable, ‘spirogenetic’ essence that determines and motivates the whole form, function and development of an essentially subjective female self, this unconditionally loved self becoming fragmented and lost through its parentally/socially imposed (de)construction by a metaphysics and language that deny and demonize its existence, and reduce woman to the material/metaphorical properties of man’s immanent essence, then it may be expected that the stages and changes in the development of this *essential* female self will reflect changes in the metaphysical/discursive conceptions of *essence*. And indeed, in relating this metaphysical/essence model of female subjectivity to the genealogy tracing the historical philosophical development of the notion of *essence*, it appears that the history of (mal)development of the contemporary essential female self, and especially the anorexic self, manifests the history of metaphysical and linguistic (mis)conceptions of the notion of essence from Platonic/Aristotelian times to the present day. If this is the case, then the anorexic self presents as evidence for the existence of a sexed spirogenetic essence and the very real effects on past and present girls/women of Aristotle’s (il)logical *misconception* of that essence and the trail of ever more intricate misconceptions that have rendered postmodern woman’s very existence dependent upon her pretended possession of a material essence and its perfect boyish form. As such, the anorexic self may also point the way to an accurate and coherent metaphysics.

This research into the origins and processes of development of female selfhood and associated mental disorders suggests that, when the ancient Greek *Heraclitus* monistically viewed reality as a material world of space and time that is always fluidly changing and therefore never the same (or knowable) from one instant to the next, and when *Plato* countered with his dualistic, hierarchical division of reality and human (male) being into fixed, knowable, immortal *form* and transient, changeable, unknowable *matter*, both ignored a third option. As theorized in Chapter 3, and as indicated by the research participants’ experiences and interpretations of their own subjective female self and the



stages and processes of its development, that third option is the existence of an originary *spirogenetic* essence, its always (im)material aspects unitedly and equally shaping the persistingly whole, identical, recognizable, and thus knowable individual, sexuate and species form - the essentially (inter)subjective mindbody self - of every human being. Only by overlooking his ideas of pre-formed matter (e.g. 'bronze') as having an intelligible order (or *logos*), and of essence as determinative of sexuate *difference* as well as sameness, could Aristotle conceive essence as a purely immaterial, male preserve, thereby granting wholly self-subsisting, developing *form* to man, and reducing real woman to de-formed, dis-ordered *fluidity*. But, in doing so, he denied both man and woman a sexed, spirogenetic essence and essentio-social self that, when free to grow and function in a wholly integrated way, permits clear intuitive (self-)perception, knowledge and expression, but when split, (sexually) fragmented and dis-integrated, may prevent mind from perceiving body, and both from enacting and actualizing their once wholly integrated form and functions.

Plausibly, it is this *spirogenetic* conception of essence and essential selfhood that was evidenced in participants' experience and knowledge of their original, childhood self as a wholly unified, integrated, self-knowing, female, mindbody self, that, within the security and freedom of unconditional, intersubjective recognition and love, could fully express and act upon her intuitive thoughts, feelings, needs, interests and desires. But, with puberty, and the (externally imposed) sexual denigration and fragmentation of this spirogenetic self, came a splitting of mind/head from body that, far from the beatific vision of absolute truth, beauty, and goodness promised to transcendent Platonic man, brought a loss of self (-knowledge) and a sense of disintegration, confusion, and alienation that reflects and refigures the Platonic/Aristotelian denial of a sexed spirogenetic essence, and the consequent mind/body dualism, as a *pathogenic* misconception of essence and essential selfhood. The ontological and social consequences of this misconception are made clear when Plato states:

[J]ust that part of the human race which is by nature prone to secrecy and stealth on account of their weakness - I mean the female sex - has been left without legislation by the legislator, which is a great mistake...in proportion as woman's nature is inferior to that of men in capacity for virtue, in that degree the consequence of such neglect is more than twice as important. (*Laws*, Bk. VI)

Of the men who came into the world, those who were cowards or led unrighteous lives may with reason be supposed to have changed into the nature of women in the second generation. (*Timaeus*, 90e)

Without an essential soul/mind, and thus having “a womanish and small intellect” (*Republic*, 469d), and without lawful regulation of their consequently uncontrolled impulses and appetites, women incite men to act lustfully, and are what men become if they do. Two millennia on, the effects of this phallogentric misconception of essence were experienced by participants as the effects of the (pubertal) shift in perception, and the real/conceptual deformation and fragmentation, of their essential female self. For, with the paternally/fraternally imposed deformation and denigration of her originally whole self, and a splitting of head/mind from (bad, shameful) sexual body, Gorgie became unable to see her self in the mirror, and insensitive of her breasts and sexual/reproductive body:

*How did you see your breasts, like when they started to develop?*

I didn't see them, that's the weird thing about it

*when you looked in the mirror [in early adulthood]?*

I couldn't see myself... 'cause I couldn't see my self other than what I was holding on to as a ^kid.

However, following the birth of her first child (Sunshine), and the development of a bond of unconditional recognition and love, Gorgie was suddenly able to see and experience her breasts, body and self for what they were, and for their real, self-defined, functional purpose:

*[With maternity] how did your view of your own self, your own body, your sexual body, how did --*

-- My body all of a sudden became functional, like my breasts became functional, I was breast-feeding .... that's what my breasts are for.... I became comfortable with that.... my breasts are for breastfeeding... they're no longer, they're not sexual, they're not there for a man.... they're there as a functional purpose, so I became very conscious of my breast .... it made me feel good about the breast in that sense.

In recognizing and loving Sunshine, and being recognized and loved as an essentially subjective self, Gorgie experienced a temporary reunification and reintegration of mind and body - that is, of her spirogenetic form and functioning - that allowed her to once again perceive and know her self for who she was, and for her own wholly self-defined female/maternal form and function; her body no longer reduced to a number of male-defined, desired, used, abused, and thus shamefully erased sexual parts. Thus, in ignoring the possibility of a sexed spirogenetic essence, Aristotle may have metaphysically reified

and ratified the mythological and social positioning of man as sole essential subject, as well as seemingly presenting him with the empirical means to knowledge of universal forms from the perception of their material manifestations. But he did so at the inestimable cost of distorting the notion of essence, and the metaphysical and binary logical view of human and worldly existence that it underpins, thereby setting the ontological and linguistic foundations for the familial, social and discursive de(con)struction of the spirogenetic form/function of Western girls (and boys) since. For, through the works of *Saint Augustine* (and later, *Thomas Aquinas*), this misconception of essence was then implanted into the Christian scriptures, beliefs and rituals that, in the present day, and along with those of Māori mythology and culture, featured so prominently in the discursively imposed de-formation, demonization, and thus, the participants' hopefully ideal reconstructions of their essential sexual female self.

This Platonic/Aristotelian denial of a spirogenetic essence determining individual, sexuate and species sameness *and* difference of form/function, and their conception of an immaterial essence or *ousia* that was the first cause and most perfect expression of man's substantial existence, growth and movement, meant that enduringly unified, recognized, loved subjective existence was no longer a given, but now had to be earned. Denied the wholly integrated, intersubjective expression and satisfaction of essential needs (for recognition, love, touch, nurturing), Platonic man's attainment of immortal subjective existence required the soul's separation from and transcendence of its now dis-integrated, untrustworthy bodily senses and lustful desires (to eat, drink and sexually submit), so that it might ascend to and become one with the absolute goodness, truth, and beauty of the world of perfect Forms. But, for *Augustine*, not only could man's soul ascend to perfect immortality; it could also be tempted into evil thoughts and deeds, and thus Fall and burn in the flaming fluidity of Hell. Thus, the attainment of goodness and immortality required more than the rational pursuit of perfection. It required the mind's receptive submission to the Word and will of the most perfect, omnipotent form of truth, goodness and beauty; that of the first and immutable essence, creator and prime mover of all that exists - the divine Father. For, in pleasing and obeying the will of God, Augustinian man received the fixed phallic form, power, language, knowledge and divine authority with which to appropriate, dominate, define, accumulate, consume, and ultimately transcend the feminine, bodily, material world. But, as told in Augustine's interpretation of the *Genesis* creation story, it was the woman, Eve, as the unbounded, potentially uncontrolled, sexually submissive

aspect of Adam's soul, that brought about his feminized fall from God's grace and into mortality and a possibly Hadean afterlife, by inciting his lust for Satan's forbidden 'fruit'. This act of transgression marked all women, their sexual female bodies, and specifically their vaginas, as the gateway of the devil; the source of evil (desire) that, unless controlled, punished, and purified, would be the death and eternal suffering of man's essential soul.

In this way, *Augustine*, and later *Aquinas* (in his five proofs of the existence of God) laid the metaphysically reinforced religious foundation and justification for man's fear of and disgust for the (soulless) sexual female body, and for every Christian girl/woman's need to be appropriated, purified, and disciplined by her real, social or divine father/husband in order to be redeemed, to be defined as the pure, good material aspect of his God-like essence, and thus, to *exist* in others' and her own eyes. This need for paternal appropriation, punishment, redemption and definition of the 'Eve-il' woman has therefore presented divine justification and authorization for the rape, torture, mutilation, and even murder of countless numbers of women throughout Judeo-Christian history; an authorization now reified in the many biblical texts that give paternal sanction to the rape of daughters, particularly as a suitably heterosexual sublimation of men's forbidden hom(m)osexual desires:

Behold, *here* is my daughter a maiden, and his concubine; them I will bring out now, and humble ye them, and do with them what seemeth good unto you: but unto this man do not so vile a thing. But the men would not hearken to him: so the man took his concubine, and brought her forth unto them; and they knew her, and abused her all the night until the morning: and when the day began to spring, they let her go. (*Judges* 19, 24-25)

Having been repeatedly gang-raped with the permission of the father and her husband, the concubine was then drawn and quartered by the latter, as punishment for her sexual 'sin':

And when he was come into his house, he took a knife, and laid hold on his concubine, and divided her, *together* with her bones, into twelve pieces, and sent her into all the coasts of Israel. (*ibid.* 29)



Figure 34: *Dealing to 'Eve-il' Desires* (Lewie)

It is this dual metaphysical and religious conception of the good, virginally pure (veiled) woman as the immanent aspect or properties of man's essence, and on the other, dark side of the coin, the deformed, demonically sexual woman that is the lustful downfall and demise of that essence, that, reified and transmitted through the ages in biblical and philosophical texts, was inscribed on the female mind and body of participants such as Gina, Lewie, Gorgie and Gwen, through the rules, rituals and proscriptions of firstly their real fathers, and secondly, their priestly and Godly fathers. For Gina, that inscription came down to her through the ecclesiastical 'churching' or postnatal purification of her mother's impure sexual/reproductive body, and thus, through her parents' perception of all things sexual, and particularly her female body, as dirty and bad. Passed on to her daughter, and etched even more deeply by Mormon teachings and rituals, that inscription saw Lewie, following her first sexual experience, splitting mind/head from body, and sexual body into

fragments, as feelings of impurity, guilt, badness and shame overcame her. Thus, once inscribed, this reconception (of the Eve-il woman) compelled participants to draw, quarter, and cast off their own sexual female self/body, in the hope of retaining or regaining the paternal recognition, love, appropriation, definition, and protection they'd once had as 'Daddy's little girl'.

But this dualistically split (Western) religious and philosophical misconception of essence, and therefore of woman, was not something new or different to Gorgie, or to her cousin Fleur. Through their grandmother's Māori *whakapapa* (genealogy), and the mythologically based socio-cultural customs, traditions and teachings received from her and their parents, both girls experienced within their family setting the objectification, demonization, and thus, the punitive (sexual and other) domination and abuse by fathers or brothers that was reified within, and divinely authorized and inscribed by Māori mythological narratives, in a way that closely aligned itself with the biblical scriptures informing Pākehā culture. For Māori spiritual beliefs also saw the human essence as purely spiritual, the *wairoa* (spirit) being possessed only by men, with women serving as the receptacle and maternal nurturer of the earthly existence of that spirit, but also as the cause of its demise. Reflecting the dualistic biblical conception of woman, the female sex was seen as the (good) material source, but also the (evil) destroyer of men's phallically generated and protected existence, as recounted in the writings of ethnologists Elsdon Best and William Goldie:

The *wairua* (spirit) of a child is, according to several of my authorities, implanted by the male parent during coition... in a general sense a male is *tapu* and a female is *noa*, or common, *i.e.*, void of *tapu* (Best, 1906, p. 3)

The *whare o aitua* means the female procreative organs (*tara, tore, &c.*), and is also applied to Mother Earth, because her children (man) die and are taken back to her bosom - *i.e.*, buried; also because of the mysterious primal curse of sex - female - which is ancient beyond compare...All troubles, misfortune, sickness, come from the *whare o aitua* (whence man enters the world) - *i.e.*, from the female sex...The *ure tane* (penis), the sacerdotal term for which is *tawhito* ('the ancient one'), is another *whare o te ora*, or representative of life. The *tawhito* is the salvation of man: it gives *mana* to his *karakia* and saves him from sickness and death. A man clasped his penis while repeating *karakia* to ward off magic spells. The *tara wahine*, or female genital organs, were...the cause of death entering the world (Goldie, 1904, p. 6)

As Best further explains, the "mysterious primal curse of sex" to which Goldie refers is woman's inception of evil into the earthly world. Thus, similarly overseen and organized by a male spirit God, *Io*, the Māori story of the creation and fall of man can be seen to echo

that of *Adam* and *Eve*. For, where *Eve* (as his inferior, passively sexual, female aspect) tempts the God-like, immortal *Adam* to lust after the satanic serpent/phallus, thus causing his fall into feminized mortality, in the Māori Creation story, it is *Hineahuone*, created and taken as his wife (and thus inferior, passively sexual, female aspect) by *Tāne*, god of the forests, that, tickled and tempted by the evil phallic eel, entices *Tāne* (personified as the phallic *Tiki*) to follow:

[O]ne day when the woman was bathing, an eel came round her body, and, with his tail, so excited the woman that there was awakened in her the sexual desire. She then went to seek Tiki, and succeeded in exciting him to an equal extent, hence there came to them the Knowledge. This act was viewed as a most serious *hara* (misdemeanour, sin), hence Tiki, knowing that the eel had caused the woman to lead him astray, resolved to take vengeance (1923, p. 56)

Lest it be thought that *Hineahuone's* sin was merely to tempt *Tiki/Tāne* to be sexual with her, Best makes clear that it was *Tāne's* prior phallic exploration of the *whare o te ora*, the non-vaginal orifices of the female body, that initially created the (submissive) desire that resulted in his ultimate Fall into sin and mortality:

Now, when Tane found woman he was ignorant of the laws of procreation and of copulation, hence he mistook the purpose of the ears, nostrils, &c. Now, if Tane had not interfered with the *whare o te ora*, death would never have approached man; he would have retained life for ever (1905, p. 155)

Having brought sin and death into the world, it was *Hineahuone* and *Tāne's* daughter, *Hinetitama*, who, on learning that she had been taken and violated by her own father, was forced through shame and disgust to flee the earthly world, thus becoming goddess and keeper of the underworld. In this way, woman and her menstruating vagina came to be seen as the gateway to and from earthly existence of both good and evil spirits, the evil *atua kahu* or eel/lizard-like spirits being able to penetrate and possess man, thus bringing (feminized) sickness, madness and/or death.<sup>92</sup> It is this orally and discursively promulgated belief that only recently led to the banning of pregnant or menstruating women from attending an exhibition of Māori *taonga* or sacred artefacts at the *Te Papa* museum in Wellington; a ban that Donna Awatere-Huata attributed to the traditional Māori fear of

---

<sup>92</sup> Best (1923) views the Christian and Māori narratives of the genesis, fall (and rise) of Man to have a shared origin in ancient Indian (Hindu) myths (i.e. *Indra* and the serpent *Vrtra*). This origin may also link them with the Australian aboriginal dreamtime myths of the Rainbow serpent/snake that penetrates, purifies and initiates/rebirths boys into manhood in the *Julunggul* ritual.

“those unclean women”, and to “woman being demonized just for being woman”.<sup>93</sup> And it is this Māori mythological and religious conception of essence/spirit as an immaterial male preserve, and thus, of woman as its good/evil material aspects, that, along with its Pākeha counterpart, found contemporary expression in, and provided sacred justification for, the inter-tribal gifting of Fleur and Gorgie’s great-great grandmother, a prized *puhi* princess.<sup>94</sup> Or, on the other side of the coin, for the disapproval, punishment, (incestuous and other) violation and degradation of their mothers’ and their own ‘evil’ sexual female bodies, whether by father or brother. Thus, for Fleur and Gorgie (as for Gina, Lewie and the other participants), the only way to escape the shame and psychic death of their ancestors *Hineahuone/Eve* and *Hinetitama* was to slough off their sexual womanly self/body and strive to once again become, in their father’s eyes, the good, visibly restrained, attractive, pleasing girl. In doing so, their minds and bodies made manifest the next stage in the historical misconception of essence: Descartes’ splitting of the Platonic notion of essence into two distinct (immaterial and material) entities, thus permitting the independent definition and existence of the rational (ultimately male) *mind*, and the natural (female) *body* of the transcendent, all-knowing (male) subject.

Ostensibly with the aim of creating a metaphysical and logical framework that would remove knowledge of the physical world from the exclusive transcendent realm of divine revelation and make it accessible to all rationally disciplined, detached, scientific minds, Descartes divided the Platonic/Augustinian notion of essence, attributing a whole immaterial essence to the conscious mind of man, and essential material *properties* to the (female) physical world of human and animal bodies. Thus, according to Cartesian metaphysics, the unfettered physical (female) body was a naturally determined, instinctively driven, insensible ‘machine’, its tamed, observed, ordered nature known as simply the sum of its (spatial) mechanical parts.

---

<sup>93</sup> These quotes are from an interview with the former MP on the current affairs programme *Marae Investigates*: <http://www.voxy.co.nz/national/marae-investigates-interviews-donna-awatere-huata-and-mamae-takerei/5/67800>

<sup>94</sup> A *Puhi* was the first-born daughter of a chief, treasured and protected for her beauty, courage and virginal purity (Te Awekotuku, 1991, p. 95).



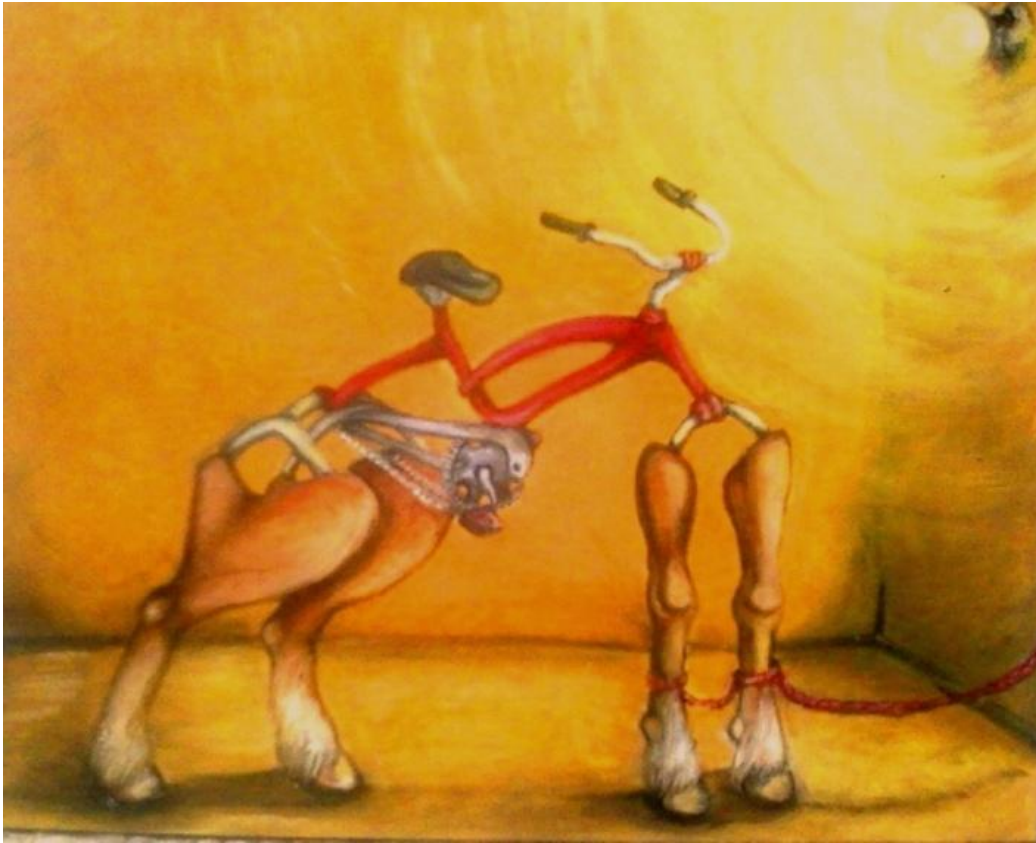


Figure 35: *Descartes' Ideal Woman* (Lewie)

For Descartes' epistemic purposes, the best body was a dead body, that, having been (femininely) subdued, manipulated, and dissected, yielded its essential properties to the rational mind of the detached, objective scientific observer, thus confirming or denying his *a priori* intuited and deduced hypotheses, and thereby arming him with the knowledge with which to tame, control and utilize the natural world. Thus, in so definitively separating and differentiating man's immaterial mind from his material body, Descartes not only divided and thus further distorted the Platonic/Aristotelian misconception of essence into a wholly evolving, ultimately male, immaterial form, and a still opposingly defined number of (femininely) fixed, material, parts, but, in doing so, created a metaphysical and logical safety-net to prevent the fall of man into the fiery, feminized abyss of demonically uncontrolled, unsatisfiable desire. For, separated from, able to exist without, and able to know, control and destroy his natural body, the ultimately transcendent mind/head need no longer fear his most forbidden desire; the desire (inherited from *Adam/Tāne*) for the Demonic phallus. On this understanding, Descartes would appear to have done what *Tāne/Maui* failed to do: to regain man's lost immortality, by not just perpetuating the Platonic logic of male homophobia, but, at a deeper, metaphysical level, bifurcating its

conception of *essence*, thereby removing the fear and possibility of fatally de-forming feminization. It is this Cartesian bifurcated (mis)conception of essence that, in contemporary times, was inscribed upon and thus further divided the already philosophically and religiously split, fragmented sexual minds and bodies of the participants. A division that was clearly manifest, for example, in *Gina* and *Kerry's* ongoing experience of a depersonalising separation of mind/head and body, the conscious self observing from above or outside the insensible physical body and its movements; and manifest also in their subsequent conception of that sexual female body as a “trolley” or a “vehicle” on which to transport their brain or mind. Similarly, this Cartesian division was manifested in *Miss P* and *Fleur's* reconception of their sexual body as a “machine” for man’s use, and as a numbed “robot”. In thus coming to conceive and perceive their sexual female body through Platonic/Augustinian/Cartesian eyes as a number of more or less imperfect (potentially uncontrollably) mechanical parts, participants strove to conceal or erase the natural sexual parts that were seen as the cause/curse of the ‘Eve-il’ female, and to hastily rebuild that body as a perfectly pleasing, femininely restrained object. In being constantly reconceived and reshaped according to feminine ideals defined and judged through the eyes and in relation to the needs (to control), (forbidden) desires, and interests of the Cartesian male mind, and later the Lockean empiricist and Kantian idealist minds, this essential feminine object gradually dematerialized until it became little more than a figment of the modern male subject’s imagination and language.

This metaphysical dematerialization of the Cartesian mechanical essence, and thus of the essentially defined feminine object/body, began with Locke’s empiricist refiguring of Descartes’ real, knowable essence as, at its root, an unobservable and thus unknowable atomic/corpuscular matrix, the only knowable essence of physical bodies being that perceived, synthesized and *nominally* defined by, and as an idea within, the observing, scientific mind. It was this Lockean shifting of the form and definition of essence away from real, material bodies and into the perceiving mind and abstract ideas of the conscious male subject that found contemporary expression in the participants’ endeavours to reconceive and reconstruct their real (sinfully) sexual female self/body as a perfect (prophylactic) object of paternal perception, conception and definition; a wholly unified *image* of an ideal, sexually attractive body, and visibly restrained (or better, absent) bodily functions. When, as adolescents, Sunshine and Lewie saw in the mirror only imperfect eyebrows or nose, or unsightly legs or breasts, and set about remodelling these parts into a

perfect *artificial form* that might win parental approval and love, they can be seen as reflecting the Lockean reduction of the whole, knowable essence/form of a physical object to its male-conceived, related and defined *idea*, the real-ly defective sexual female body/parts fading (or pushed) into the realm of the unknowable.

This dematerialization of the Cartesian material essence into an idea or concept constructed by and within the male mind continued with Kant's transference of the logical laws and (spatio-temporal) categories that Aristotle had applied to *real* substantial beings into that mind, where, from a mass of disordered sense perceptions, it determinately synthesized and defined the essentially whole *phenomenal* form of correspondingly real (but unknowable) physical bodies (or things-in-themselves). For Kant, external objects did not imprint their nominal properties on the human mind (as Locke thought), but were perceived and *known to exist* only if they correlated to the intuitively and logically constructed - and thus universally definable and knowable - objects contained within the consciously subjective mind of phenomenal man. On this basis, Kant was now able to construct, define, and thus know the essentially fixed, phenomenal form and properties of woman, a form based on the objectifying perceptions, conceptions, and intuitive understandings of the male mind. And, although Kant attributes a mind to (noumenal) woman, because she is inevitably ruled by (and reduced to) naturally immoral and uncontrollable bodily senses and appetites, she is excluded from categorically constitutive subjectivity, and must be and remain an intuitively and logically constructed and defined *object* or *appearance* within the mind, and thus, under the conceptual and physical ownership and control, of man. But, with Husserl's uniting of real things-in-themselves with their phenomenal representations, and his subsequent *projection* of these intentionally constructed (feminine) objects *out* of the conscious (male) mind and into an outer, transcendently ideal world posited as the only true, knowable reality, this dematerializing reconception of woman/essence as appearance was given to appear - and thus further misconceived - as real. In this way, the essential form and existence of real, (demonically) natural woman became reduced to an inchoate, inexplicable mass of sense data, awaiting formal construction and organization by, within, and according to the desires, intentions and logic of, the phenomenal male mind. It was this phenomenological reconception of the Cartesian/Lockean essence and essential form as a male-mind-constructed, defined, projected, and thus seemingly real *appearance* that found contemporary expression in Lewie's concept and figure of the *Doll Girl* - the mindless, hollow, plastic assemblage of

perfectly perky breasts and manoeuvrable female body parts, chastely devoid of ‘dirty’, ‘smutty’, ‘evil’ female genitalia. As modern man’s idea of the perfect girl/woman, the *Doll Girl* exemplifies the traditional ideals of sexually objectified, passively subservient femininity that were parentally, socially and discursively imposed upon, and pursued by, the participants’ mothers and foremothers. Ideals that required an ever slim, beautiful, youthful, sexually attractive, but also chastely self-restrained appearance, and a pleasing and compliant willingness to reshape - to add to, or subtract from - one’s apparently real *artificial* form as these ideals altered across time, place, culture and class. Thus, the *Doll Girl* is the Freudian false, repressively reconstructed, projected, screened image or phantasy of feminine perfection.



Figure 36: *Living Doll* (‘Gonna lock her up in a trunk...’) (Lewie)

Created as a figment of the male imagination, desire and intention, this projectively re-materializing feminine essence/form subsequently gained a further measure of real, objectively defined and known existence when Wittgenstein reconceived the idealists’

phenomenal world, not as a mind-dependent construct, but as an external world of real objects, the existence and essential properties of which are determined by their place within an underlying logical structure shared with, and revealed by, language. The transcendent Wittgensteinian subject uses the logical rules, words and definitions learnt from and shared with other male subjects to construct, know, limit and control this object-filled world, that, because it admits of no whole essences or physical beings, is simply a male-constructed, -related world of textualized “mirror images” or language objects. This linguistic reconception of phenomenal essences and objects therefore sees the perfect *Doll Girl* transformed from a subjectively and logically constructed and projected *mind* body, into an objectively and logically constructed, named *language* body that is now a communally knowable and exchangeable aggregate of purely relational properties. Reified and universalized within language, this purely nominal, relational essence of femininity was now able to be inter-generationally, socially and discursively transmitted and inscribed; its contemporary inscription onto the (defective, demonic) sexual bodies of the participants and their foremothers resulting in their reconstruction of a hopefully perfect, paternally pleasing, prophylactic form.

For the participants’ mothers and foremothers, attainment of the linguistically and socially prescribed ideal feminine form that marked them as perfect, or at least good, and therefore lovable, meant attainment of, and inscription with, the male-defined properties and identities of the passive, subservient, attractive ‘daughter’, ‘wife’, and ‘mother’. Thus, whether it was the perfectly and immutably beautiful *Doll Girl* that *Lewie’s* mother and grandmother strove to be, or the perfectly and obsessively clean, always orderly housewife that *Kerry’s* mother had to be, or the subservient ‘neck’ that *Gwen* wished to be, thus, like her mother, providing indispensable and unwavering support for her husband as the (God) ‘head’, these names and identities relationally reconstructed and defined these women, giving them an enduring - albeit false, male-dependent - form and existence. When Kripke then anchors the essential properties of this phenomenally conceived, linguistically reified and reconstructed feminine form to a real, fixed, material, microstructural essence, he completes the essentialists’ trail of misconceptions of the notion of essence, by adding an element of naturalistic determinacy to what has shown itself to be a mind-conceived, objectified *apparition*; an ever-changing artifice constructed and controlled as the sublimation of the submissive will of the ultimately transcendent male subject. It is this apparently real, naturally determinate essence, as traditionally employed to reify and

justify men's conception (and oppression) of women as inferior, irrational, evil, and thus needing to be subjugated and purified, that, inscribed on the *participants'* sexually developing bodies, brought their uniform rejection of the traditional ideals and identities of passive, submissive femininity.

Born into and constructed by a familial and social world further shaped and changed, firstly by (liberal) feminist theory and activism, and secondly, by postmodern thought and culture, the sexually objectified, domesticated Kripkean woman that participants saw in their (fore)mothers was something they *would* not - and in fact *could* not - become. Not that the participants did not also strive to slough off and escape their pejoratively natural, sexual female bodies by psychically and physically reducing and reconstituting them as a desensitized collation of hopefully ideal feminine parts. They did: the flat-chested adolescent *Jean* risking humiliating exposure for social approval of her fake, padded breastline; the similarly flat-chested *Gorgie* taking the cheaper but more risky option of two raw potatoes; the abused, shamed *Cilla* scrubbing her legs red-raw to erase her dirty sexual female self/body and become again the pure, good daughter; and the pubescent *Sunshine* refashioning herself as Madonna's 'Material Girl' in order to win parental and peer recognition, love and approval. But there was a marked difference between the ideal feminine form pursued by their mothers, and that pursued by the participants. Where the former prescribed a beautiful, passively submissive *object* of male construction, ownership, control and exchange, reduced to and valued for her *appearance* and *use*, the latter prescribed not just a pretty face, but also a *head*, with a brain and mind that, in these post-feminist, postmodern times, was not just expected, but *compelled* to successfully imitate the (perfect) androgynous form and functions of the boyishly re-embodied male subject. In Lewie's words and images, the contemporary girl was expected to turn herself into not just the *Doll Girl*, but also the *Hare Girl* - the pretend prophylactic self that constantly, frenetically, and obsessively strives to achieve and maintain the paternally imposed ideals of boyishly subjectified form and function. Ideals that demand not only slender, self-restrained beauty and a playful sexual attractiveness, but also self-motivated intelligence, autonomy, achievement, and a fit, muscularly defined, androgynous form that signals the (masculine) self-disciplined, desensitized, spiritual transcendence and (feminine) restraint of vulgarly natural (potentially voracious) appetites and desires.



Figure 37: *Maenadic Hare Girl* (Lewie)

In thus rejecting traditional feminine ideals and striving to reconstruct their sexually fragmented self/body according to contemporary ideals and identities of boyishly subjectified form and function, the participants' reconstructed pretend prophylactic self can be understood as reflecting and expressing both liberal feminist and correlated male poststructuralist reconceptions of the Lockean/Kripkean bifurcated (mis)conception of essence.

When Simone De Beauvoir implored traditionally subjugated, objectified women to escape their 'Othering' by transcending their naturally determined sexual/reproductive bodies and functions, and thus, like men, constructing and attaining active, self-directed subjectivity, she was rejecting the notion and existence of an original, natural (genetic) essence that fixedly determines the essential properties and nature of woman. For De Beauvoir, woman was made, not born, and where she had historically been socially and discursively constructed as passively immanent, irrational, female object or 'Other', she could and

should now reconstruct herself as transcendently active, rational subject. With the absorption of this egalitarian view of woman (as a social construct) into the broader socio-linguistic and discursive orders and their (dualized) concepts, images, and definitions of womanhood, the feminine ideals inscribed upon and expected of girls/women changed, requiring their rejection of the traditionally objectifying qualities that the participants saw in their foremothers. It was no longer desirable that they be constructed as the perfectly attractive, submissive daughter, wife and mother, but rather, as the perfectly attractive, subjectively self-directed, self-disciplined sportswoman, ballerina, nurse, artist or academic, *and* wife and mother. Hence the participants' idealized reconception and reformation of their pejoratively sexual female self/body as not just a trolley or a collection of desensitized, mechanized parts, but as a "head", a "mind", an "essence", and/or an "intellect" atop and transported by that trolley, identified only by the various uniforms, labels and identities that adorned it.

However, while the modern girl/woman was striving to overcome her sexual female embodiment and gain access to transcendent (male) subjectivities and identities, anti-essentialist male philosophers such as Nietzsche, Derrida and Foucault were seeking to reunite the transcendently pure but isolated, epistemically confused essentialist subject with his feared, alienated 'Other', the (potentially uncontrollably) desiring feminine body. And they did so by reclaiming for themselves the material essence and (real/ideal/linguistic) essential properties historically ascribed to woman by essentialist philosophers from Descartes to Kripke. Thus, in 'becoming woman', the Derridean 'Dionysian' male subject and the Foucauldian 'dandy' (or 'metrosexual') reclaim their bodies and the metaphysical right to be material and immaterial, active and passive, masculine and feminine, rational and emotional. But, in doing so, they deny real women any material or immaterial definition or existence whatsoever. For, released from the Lockean model of a microstructural essence that fixes and determines the phenomenally perceived and defined properties of (feminine) bodies/objects, Derrida and Foucault assume for the natural, organic (male) body a material essence or persistingly whole (phallic) *form*, the growth and development of which enables its regulatory construction into femininely embodied, enlightened subjectivity. Denied this essentially whole, self-manifesting form, 'woman' and her natural sexual female body/parts are reconceived as the pure, fluidly unconstructible, undecidable (material/maternal) source, the phallic (metaphorical) properties, and the (sexual) demise of the postmodern male subject. It is



this poststructurally modified notion of essence that, inscribed onto participants' sexually developing female bodies, brings them face-to-face with the subjective unconstructibility and thus (im)material non-existence promised by looming womanhood, leaving them no existential choice but to pursue and attain the ideals, and thus achieve the perfect, boyishly imitative (phallic) form required for construction into (limited) subjectivity. Is it any wonder then, that *Jean* or *Gwen* saw their reconstructed pretend self as tomboyish, or that *Gorgie* imagined her ideal self as the ever-boyish *Peter Pan*, or that *Lewie* imagined and physically recreated herself as the boyish Victorian chimney-sweep, or that *Cilla* covered her sexual femaleness with full-length, boyish sports uniforms (of soft-ballers and cricketers), or that *Kerry*, *Jean* and *Gina* saw their subjective adult selves as a (disembodied/masculine) intellect, or that *Gwen* encased her female self in the armour of God? For only a boy not only *has*, but also *retains*, the perfectly whole (and thus constructible) material form. And is it any wonder that, being unable to gain access to these boyishly imitative forms of subjective definition, recognition and existence (because unable to escape one's 'Eve-il' sexual female self), the (ED) participants may have felt compelled to withdraw from the socio-symbolic world, and to reconstruct their own desexualized, defeminized, boyishly or childishly perfect form and function, in order to ensure their ongoing (recognized, loved) subjective existence?

As one contemporary manifestation of this prophylactic withdrawal and self-adjudicated punishment, purification and reconstruction of the perfect form, *anorexia* (or other eating disorder) is the very visible and most desperate expression of the poststructuralist denial of a material essence and essentially whole, constructible form - and thus, of a sociolinguistically and self-cultivated subjectivity - to woman. For what united the eating disordered participants was the perceived or actual inability to escape what they had learnt to see as their dirty, imperfect, bad, shameful, sexual female self/body, and thus attain the perfect (boyish) form (of appearance and achievement) that would win the approval of, and thus be granted (albeit limited) subjective existence, recognition and love by, their real/social/divine father. Trapped within her badness, the anorexic/bulimic girl had no option but to use food, exercise, razors and/or drugs to starve, cut, erase, punish, purify, and thus make good again (or destroy), her real - but monstrously de-formed, demonic, fragmented - sexual female body, and thus, self.

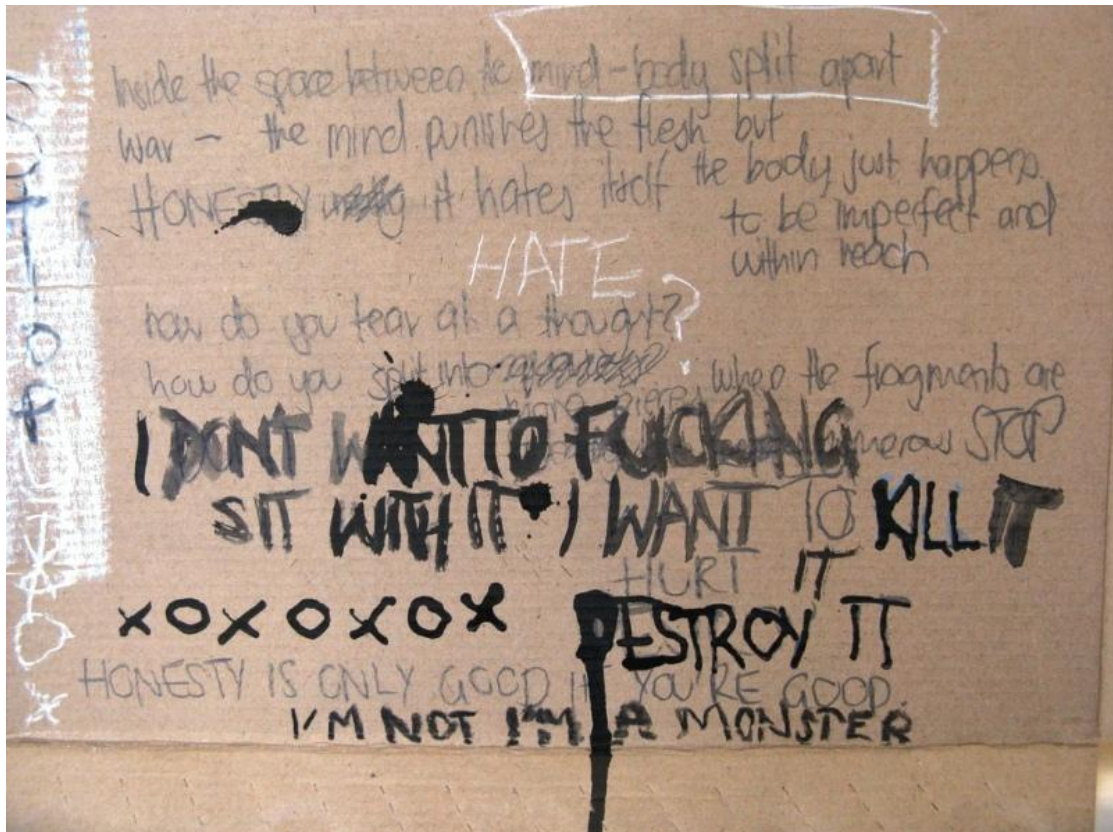


Figure 38:

(Kayla)

In thus reshaping the perfect prophylactic form for her self, the anorexic/bulimic/orthorexic participant became the very real, very isolated, but also hopeful manifestation of the postmodern male's further (mis)conception of essence. Denied an immaterial *or* material essence, the anorexic girl/woman strove to escape what *Nietzsche* saw as man's 'bitch Sensuality'; what *Derrida* saw as the 'abyss' of non-existence; what *Lacan* saw as the 'empty set', the 'not all'; what *Sartre* saw as 'holes' and 'slime'; and what *Foucault* (via allegiance to his ideal man, *Baudelaire*) saw as naturally uncultivable, sexually uncontrolled, and therefore vulgar, horrible and disgusting. That is, she strove to escape her real sexual female self, and particularly her natural womanly body, the essence-less, formless *non-existence* of which is the *condition* of postmodern boy/man's exclusive construction into fluidly embodied, but ultimately transcendent subjectivity, as well as being the *cause* of his (perforated, feminized) destruction.

However, even when the ED participant managed to repressively escape her real, bad sexual self by creating and maintaining some sense and concept of her self as a purified, re-formed, and therefore a good, lovable, socially acceptable and constructible self, her return to the outer world of phallic subjectivities and identities did not bring an escape

from the (dis)order, but rather, its transformation. For the anorexic/bulimic rituals of self-denial, -discipline, -purification, and -protection that desexualized, defeminized, and thus recreated the perfectly constructible form were simply replaced with other less drastic, more socially acceptable obsessive-compulsive rituals (of cleaning, dieting, nail-biting, working) and/or other disorders (depression, alcohol) that expressed and maintained the repressive purification and re-formation of the real sexual self; a re-formation demanded of *all* the participants as the condition for social and discursive (re)construction into a (limited) range of boyish subjectivities and identities. In this way, the participants made manifest the murderous consequences of the poststructuralist misconception of essence, and the model of subjective mal-development that it underpins.

In recognizing an originary material essence (or *logos*), possessed only by boys/men, this poststructuralist model conceives the development of (rational/aesthetic) subjectivity as the social and self-construction of the essentially whole, phallically formed, male body from a natural, fluidly female state of (potentially uncontrollable) animal instincts and drives, to an ideal (but still embodied) state of self-directed masculine subjectivity; the latter conceived by Irigaray (2008) as a self-cultivated, inspired state of autonomously self-limiting, sensibly transcendent, subjective existence. Thus, for the Baudelairean dandy, as for his contemporary, the metrosexual man, fully actualized masculine subjectivity required the visible and stylishly feminine restraint of otherwise immoderate bodily appetites and desires. This means that, even though the essentially formed, natural *body* and the cultivated *spirit/mind* become reunited in the postmodern (heterosexual, male) subject, they exist in a still hierarchical relation that requires the priorly existing (fluidly female) body to be and remain subdued and submissive to its cultivated, destructively creative (masculine) mind. Hence, when the participants gained access to social/discursive construction into boyishly subjectified identities (as sportsperson, academic, rural delivery operator, nurse, health care planner, landscaper, accounting secretary, bank clerk, artist or salesperson), they imitated and personified a masculine head/mind constantly subjugating, erasing, femininely reconstructing and re-inscribing its natural body into a unified, controlled, boyishly androgynous form. A form valued and admired for its cultivated, forever youthful appearance, and its exhibition of *self-control* of fearful, potentially demonic appetites and desires. In doing so, they imitated and thus validated the postmodern male subject's reclamation of the feminine, and of the fluidly pluralized (but still hierarchical) embodiment and expression of difference that it permits. This

reclamation of feminine embodiment is currently manifesting, for example, in the femininely heterosexual form of the (male) ‘metrosexual’; in the increasing (hetero-) expression of ‘man-love’ or ‘bromance’; in the encouragement of boys/men to show affection/emotion; in their boyishly feminine styles of dress, bodily adornment and care (with male model *Pejic* epitomizing this femininity); in the surgical, chemical, and textual reinscription of various aspects of their embodied subjectivity (e.g. *Michael Jackson*; the shaved, tattooed body of *All Blacks* pin-up *Sonny Bill Williams*; and ‘Brotox’); in their increasing preference for anal sex (McBride & Fortenberry, 2010); and in taking on (and valorizing) the role of the chef, the house-husband, or the typist who (like the Dionysian warrior) constantly de- and re-constructs his material self/world with the text flowing from his ‘stylish’ phallic keyboard. And, as *Lewie* and *Sunshine* observed, the contemporary girl/woman’s boyishly subjectified, femininely restrained (but potentially bacchanalian) embodiment is currently finding expression in the plethora of surgical/chemical procedures that tighten, lighten, darken, reshape, remove and replace undesirable female body parts in the hope of gaining and retaining the perfectly slim, boyish form; in the phenomenon of the “ladette” - the young, successful professional who, after dark, becomes as loud, drunk and unruly, and as (ab)usive of her own sexual female body as the lads;<sup>95</sup> in the social acceptance and prevalence of performative lesbianism (especially in hetero-porn);<sup>96</sup> and in the male expectation that ‘normal’ hetero-sex can be ever more violent and degrading of the sexual female body, and the girl/woman who owns that body will not just permit, but *want* it. Or, as *Lewie* tells it,

every boy watches....pornography these days, every single one of them, I’ve never met one that doesn’t....they look at how they behave sexually in pornography which is outrageous ...and then they act in that way, in their own sexual ways where they’re very very, dominant and rough with the females --

-- *Violent*

Violent, yeah, like so many females I’ve heard about, have complained that they don’t enjoy sexual activity because it’s just...not pleasing for them at all, because...the boys can be so violent and they can hurt them a lot, and they don’t feel they can tell them that it hurts.

With the real, natural sexual female body/parts now signifying only de-formed, demonically uncontrolled desire and non-existence, could it be that, for postmodern man,

---

<sup>95</sup>The contemporary phenomenon of the "ladette" is recognized and explored in the Australian 60 Minutes TV documentary (2008) *Girls Will Be Boys*. See <http://video.au.msn.com/watch/video/girls-will-be-boys/x1etmro>. Also Jackson (2006), *Lads and Ladettes in School: Gender and a Fear of Failure*.

<sup>96</sup> See Chivers, Rieger, Latty & Bailey (2004). Also, Taylor (2003) suggests that men’s enjoyment of lesbian porn offers homophobic confirmation of their heterosexuality. See: <http://www.salon.com/sex/feature/2003/08/27/lesbo>.

sex has become the ever more violent means to punish and subdue that which so clearly represents - and thus relieves - his own feared, fatal, but inescapable desire to submit?

In striving to reconstruct and maintain the perfect, boyishly subjectified, prophylactic self, Lewie, Gina, Gorgie, Sunshine and others offered up their real, numbed, discarded sexual female body/parts as a means to an approved and accepted social or marital identity, while their (detached) head/mind everyday pursued the ideals required to (re)gain and maintain access to phallic subjectivities and identities. This pursuit was driven - to the point of obsession - by the fear of failure and consequent subjective non-existence, and by the deeper and enduring feelings of loss, emptiness, turmoil, grubbiness, and disconnection from their real self, and others. For, what is required in order that postmodern man alone be cultivated into fully embodied, perfectly divine subjectivity, and in order that postmodern woman daily and successfully imitate that subjectivity, is that both turn on, castrate/destroy, and reconstruct a childishly pure, re-veiled version of the real sexual woman - a version that, as Derrida says, she knows to be fake, but also seductively attractive to men (1979, p. 362). A re-virginalized version valued because it too keeps the Derridean metrosexual man at a safe distance from the nihilistic abyss awaiting his own penetrated, castrated feminization. Meanwhile, on pain of her own subjective and symbolic death, postmodern girl/woman *cannot stop* pursuing and attaining her daily dose of goodness (that is, of boyishly perfect form), and thus, the recognition, approval, and phallic/eucharistic blessings of the real, social, transcendent, or inner father. But as Sunshine said (and as Lewie and other participants echoed), all she really wanted was to find and be seen and known again as the essentially whole, unconditionally loved person that she was as a child:

Probably the best person to ask about how anyone would see ourselves without being fragmented is to ask children...[they] look at you as a whole person.... when 'T' sees me he looks in my face.... he loves you for who you are.

For Lewie, it was about being a woman who was perceived, known and loved,

[as a] person, because that's what we are, we're people, we're not an age, or a gender or whatever, or a race, or a species, we're a person...we're an existence, we're an essence, we are an ego.

a wish echoed by *Rose*, the key figure in the documentary *Girls will be Boys* (2008), who, despite striving to be the best, funniest, most hard-drinking, loud-mouthed, violent *ladette* in town, seen and accepted as one of the boys, and “beating men at their own game”, reveals in the last moments of the interview:<sup>97</sup>

D’you know what? I guess, like this is personal for me...since I was a kid, I’ve always wanted...society’s validation that I’m okay...you know...I want to throw it out there... ‘n say *this is me*...and I’m telling you, I’m not who I want to be...I’m not okay...I need some help.

But this original essence and essential self - the real me - that *Rose* and my participants long for is not an enduringly formed *material* body that develops and is socio-linguistically cultivated into divinely inspired, autonomously self-limiting, adult subjectivity as Nietzsche, Derrida, Foucault and Irigaray have theorized. Nor is it a perfectly formed *immaterial* soul that, trapped within a sinfully and voraciously desiring, deceitfully sensing body, yearns for immortal transcendence of its immanent existence as Plato, Aristotle, Augustine and Descartes theorized. Rather, it is consciously experienced, then later remembered, very occasionally experienced, and/or secretly yearned, as an originally and persistingly whole, unified *spirogenetic* essence and essentially subjective female self or “person”, born, enduringly existing, and essentio-socially constructed within an unbroken maternal (and paternal) bond of unconditional, intersubjective recognition and love. In this case, the *sexual* female, womanly self and her sexuality become, as Lewie says, simply an extension and further expression of that essence, and that bond, rather than the real and perceived result and symbol of their loss:

Yeah, it’s an expression almost, like with art and dance or music...it’s often like an expression of feelings or emotions or whatever, why can’t sexuality be seen as just an extension and an expression and a part of us rather than, this...other thing completely.

---

<sup>97</sup> See page 307 for the footnote reference to this documentary.



Figure 39: *The 'Other' Thing* (Lewie)

Blinded to and separated from their essentially whole, but metaphysically, familialy, socially and discursively denied, deformed and demonized *spirogenetic* selves, these contemporary, boyishly subjectified, phallically identified daughters follow their mothers, grandmothers, and foremothers - whether Pākeha or Māori, whether real, religious, mythological or philosophical - in longing and waiting to be reunited with, allowed to represent, and unconditionally and intersubjectively recognized and loved for, their currently symbolically non-existent, yet subterraneously sub-sisting, essential sexual female self.



Figure 40: *Barely Hopefully Sub-Sisting* (Lewie)

Until this occurs, their subjective existence remains a *masquerade*; a succession of phallic male-defined, dissimulated identities that alienate and desensitize them to their once essentially integrated bodies, feelings, desires and intuitions, that therefore robotically disconnect them from others, and that, fearing loss of those identities, compel them to surreptitiously maintain, or completely withdraw into, a self-punishing, purifying, desexualizing, childish ‘re-formation’ of that self. A perfect, lovable re-formation that today, as in medieval and Victorian times, may be most visibly, and most murderously manifesting in the mind, body and spirit of the anorexic/bulimic/orthorexic/obese girl and woman.



It appears, then, that Epicurus was speaking truly when he surmised that a correct metaphysics brings inner peace and tranquillity, an incorrect one, inner turmoil. For it seems that Plato and Aristotle may have misconceived the notion of *essence* as a purely immaterial, male-possessed entity, thereby creating the foundation for over two millennia of further misconceptions that have, in turn, distorted our metaphysical, logical, and linguistic representations of reality in ways that are currently, and under the conditions outlined in Chapter 6, resulting in the occurrence of eating and associated disorders in girls and women. On this basis, it seems that the solution to these (dis)orders would be a reconception of essence that, based on my research findings, would figure it as an originally and inextricably immaterial and material, or *spirogenetic* entity, possessed by male *and* female, and operating at individual, sexuate, and species levels to determine, (inter-)textually construct, and motivate the whole form, function, growth and development of every human being; an essence that can therefore be seen and known as a source of fixity *and* fluidity, sameness *and* difference, unity *and* plurality. To reconceive essence in this way would then permit a reconfiguring of the metaphysical, logical and linguistic models of human and worldly existence that it underpins.

The recognition of a spirogenetic essence as the first cause of the existence, enduring form, function, and growth of human (and non-human) beings means that the process of development of the individual can no longer be seen as an ascent from a natural (female) state of fluidly chaotic material drives and ‘animal’ instincts to a transcendently embodied or disembodied (male) state of *Logically* enformed, ordered, (seemingly) self-directed subjectivity. Instead, consciously embodied, enformed, related subjectivity is always already present at (and before) birth, its growth and development simply an unfolding and a flourishing of that subjectivity, its autonomous and wholly integrated expression fostered, shaped and realized within enduring familial/social bonds of unconditional intersubjective recognition and love. And, because this spirogenetic essence determines not just the enduring *sameness*, but also the enduring *difference* in (whole) individual, sexuate, and species form, function and growth, the Aristotelian logic that structures and defines the nature and categories of essential (*ousiatic*) being must be refigured so that the primary relation is not ‘subject-object’, but ‘subject-subject’, the ‘other’ subject being (recognized as) essentially same as, and/or different to, oneself. In this case, any subsequent form of definition and representation of an individual must be based upon (mutual) recognition of

his/her spirogenetically whole, self-known and -defined, subjective form and function, if it is to truly and authentically represent that individual. With this refounding of Aristotelian logic, the previously impure, fluidly chaotic realm of “buzzing, booming confusion” (Frye, 1996, p. 1000) that was Aristotelian man’s demonically unbounded, abyssal, *female* realm of all things ‘not-man’, suddenly transforms from a fearfully “infinite, undifferentiated plenum” (ibid.) into a real world of essentially whole, recognizably and reassuringly *same* - but also infinitely and interestingly *different* - forms of life. Because these forms are no longer seen as pure fluidity, or purely immaterial, or the perceived properties of mutely objectified bodies, but are originally, subjectively spirogenetic, their essential form (and function) need no longer be rationally or divinely intuited by a Platonic/Cartesian subject, or empirically intuited by an Aristotelian subject, or *a priori* synthesized by the mind of the Kantian/Husserlian subject, to be real-ly or phenomenally known. Rather, this persisting, actualizing form is known, (categorically) defined, and revealed to other subjects by the subjective being that enduringly possesses, experiences, remembers, and most intimately knows it, thereby allowing others to real-ly and intersubjectively perceive and know that essential nature of the person-in-him/herself. On this basis, the Platonically divided definitions of the *real* and *nominal* (or linguistic) essences of living beings become reunited, in that the real, self-experienced, self-defined, spirogenetic essence of every individual can and must provide the conceptual form or template for any nominally constructed definition of the essential nature and qualities of that individual. That is, the subjective, logic-based definition of the essential form/function of an individual (and its kind) gives the basic definition of its name. With this correspondence of the real and nominal essences of living beings, the term ‘woman’ is irrevocably reunited with its real spirogenetically formed, subjective referent, or that which the participants knew and referred to as the ‘real me’; that is, their *essential (sexual) female self*.

This reinstatement of woman as a wholly self-subsisting, self-defined subject within our metaphysical, logical and linguistic systems of representation means that pubescent girls (and their fathers) need no longer fear, demonize, fragment, reject, reconstruct, and control their sexually developing selves in the way that the participants and their foremothers were compelled to do. Rather, sexual development becomes simply a further unfolding and expression, within unbroken personal and social bonds of unconditional recognition, love and acceptance, of the whole, spirogenetically integrated female self; an unfolding that *Gorgie* began to experience later in life, as she set out to recover, reconstitute, know, and

subjectively express - and then received unconditional, intersubjective recognition and love for - her real female self. As the research findings show, this recovery, involving a re-establishing of the bonds of love and attunement with her daughter *Sunshine*, flourished during the (extended) interview process, as the very exploration of the subjectively experienced stages, processes, and events in the (de)construction of selfhood seemingly assisted in the recovery and intersubjective expression of her original, essentially whole female self. As Gorgie described the gradual repossession and reconstitution of this spirogenetic self, or 'real me':

I've taken ownership back of my body....I don't feel that any part of my body has to be...a display for someone else to get an idea of who I am, or get an image of what they think I am ....I want people to look at my eyes, I want people to look into me now.

When I say 'look at my face', I mean look at what I've got to say, ok...when I used to hide my self, it was because I didn't feel I had anything to say. Now it's like 'look at me, look at my eyes, look that I'm a sincere person, look at my emotions, look at my authentic self....and if tears roll into my eyes, it's because this is who I am.... I'm out there just representing my self now, and....I just want to represent my self as I truly am.

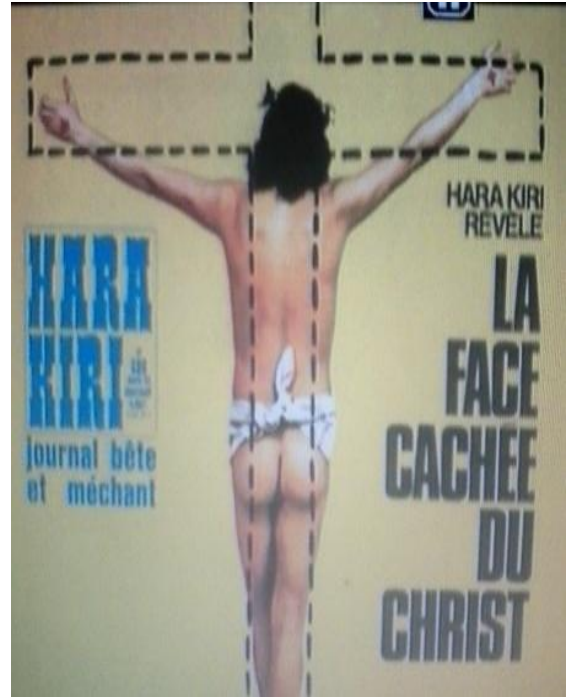
In this way, Gorgie echoes the longing expressed by each and every participant: that, as woman, she be recognized, loved and represented, not for how she looks or what she achieves, but simply for who she essentially and truly is; for the form, functions, thoughts, desires, emotions, and feelings of her spirogenetically whole, subjective, sexual female self; a subjective *reformation* that would resurrect and regenerate not just woman, but also man.

For, to metaphysically reconceive and symbolically represent woman in this way would be to obviate the need for boys to separate from and objectify the mother/woman, thereby breaking the bond of unconditional love and turning to their real, social, and/or transcendent Fathers to compete for disciplinary love and approval, submissive receipt of the divine (eucharistic) Phallus, and entry into phallic subjectivity. It would therefore release supposedly autonomous, rationally, aesthetically and divinely transcendent, but constantly tormented Platonic/Augustinian/Cartesian/Derridean man from his historical state of forbidden, repressed, reviled, and philosophically, theologically, and aesthetically sublimated desire; that is, from the submissive *passion* that he necessarily projects onto - and therefore piercingly punishes, destroys, and chastely replaces - the 'Eve-il' woman and

the Fallen, feminized man, in order to cultivate, protect, and ultimately immortalize, his own phallic form and existence.



Figure 41: *Demonic Passions*



(*La Face Cachée des Fesses* [Pochon, 2009])

Released from dependence upon the Father's pedagogical love, recognition and forgiveness, the mind and body of male and female subjects would be free to reunite in a way that now reveals the essence of their unity. It is unconditional intra- and inter-subjective *love* that seemingly inspires, binds, motivates, and interrelates the mindbody of every essentially spirogenetic self, and that is the basis for its fully integrated, harmoniously related existence, (sexual) development, and actualization, but that, if denied, brings more or less fragmented, disordered, discontented, melancholic existence. It is perhaps, then, within a metaphysics based upon the recognition of sexed spirogenetic essences and unconditionally, intra/inter-subjectively loved, attuned, essential selves, that we may glimpse that long sought Epicurean state of inner peace, tranquillity and 'ease'; a possibility further fired by Irigaray's (2002) insight that 'The wisdom of love is perhaps the first meaning of the word 'philosophy''.

\*\*\*\*\*



## **Bibliography**

Abels, Paul and Sonia (2001). *Understanding Narrative therapy: A guidebook for the social worker*. New York: Springer Publishing.

Adorno, Theodor (trans. Domingo, W., 1982). *Against epistemology - A metacritique: Studies in Husserl and the phenomenological antinomies*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Alter, Torin & Walter, Sven (eds., 2006). *Phenomenal concepts and phenomenal knowledge: New essays on consciousness and physicalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Aquinas, Thomas (trans. Dominicans, 1912). *Summa Theologica*. London: R. & T. Washbourne.

Aristotle (1941). *The basic works of Aristotle*, Mckeon, R. (ed.). New York: Random House.

Aristotle, (trans. Peck, A. L., 1953). *On the generation of animals*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Aristotle, (trans. Rackham, H., 1959 [1932]). *Politics*. London: Heinemann.

Aristotle, (trans. Barnes, J., 1976). *Posterior analytics*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Aristotle, (trans. Bostock, D., 1994). *Metaphysics: Books [zeta] and [eta]*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Aristotle, (trans. Pickard-Cambridge, W. A., 2007). *Topics*. Retrieved February 15, 2012, from <http://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/a/aristotle/a&t/book7.html>

Atsma, Aaron (2000). *Dionysus*. Retrieved January 20, 2009, from <http://www.theoi.com/Olympios/Dionysos.html>

Attwood, Margaret (1987, [1986]). *The handmaid's tale*. London: Virago Press.

Augustine (trans. Outler, A.C., 1955). *The Confessions*. London: SCM.

Augustine (trans. Bettenson, H., 1972, [1467]). *City of God*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.

Augustine (trans. Haddan, A., 1887). *On the Trinity*. Retrieved June 23, 2011, from [http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com\\_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2273&chapter=213789&layout=html&Itemid=27](http://oll.libertyfund.org/?option=com_staticxt&staticfile=show.php%3Ftitle=2273&chapter=213789&layout=html&Itemid=27)

Awatere, Donna (1984). *Maori sovereignty*. Auckland: Broadsheet, pp. 34-55.

Baillie, James (2003). *Contemporary analytic philosophy*, (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

Balmory, Marie (trans. Lukacher, N., 1982). *Psychoanalyzing Psychoanalysis*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University.

Beattie, Tina (1999). "The female body and the sacramental priesthood in neo-orthodox Catholic Theology". Retrieved February 29, 2012, from <http://www.womenpriests.org/body/beattie3.asp>

Bell, Rudolph (1985). *Holy anorexia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Benjamin, Jessica (1990, [1988]). *The bonds of love: Psychoanalysis, feminism, and the problem of domination*. London: Virago Press.

Berkman, John (1930). "Anorexia nervosa, anorexia, inanition, and Low metabolic rate", *The American Journal of the Medical Sciences*, September, Vol. 180, Issue 3, pp. 411-424

Best, Elsdon (1904). *Maori Eschatology: The whare potae (house of mourning) and its lore*. Retrieved September 17, 2009, from [http://rsnz.natlib.govt.nz/volume/rsnz\\_37/rsnz\\_37\\_00\\_000330.html](http://rsnz.natlib.govt.nz/volume/rsnz_37/rsnz_37_00_000330.html)

Best, Elsdon,(1905). *Maori Eschatology: Myth of Maui and Hine-nui-te-po*. Retrieved November 21, 2010, from [http://rsnz.natlib.govt.nz/volume/rsnz\\_38/rsnz\\_38\\_00\\_002730.html](http://rsnz.natlib.govt.nz/volume/rsnz_38/rsnz_38_00_002730.html)

Best, Elsdon (1906). "The Lore of the Whare-Kohunga", *The Journal of the Polynesian Society Vol. XV*. Retrieved November 22, 2010, from [http://www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/document/Volume\\_15\\_1906/Volume\\_15,\\_No.\\_1/The\\_lore\\_of\\_the\\_ware\\_kohanga,\\_Part\\_II,\\_Pregnancy,\\_by\\_Elsdon\\_Best,\\_p\\_1-26#note1](http://www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/document/Volume_15_1906/Volume_15,_No._1/The_lore_of_the_ware_kohanga,_Part_II,_Pregnancy,_by_Elsdon_Best,_p_1-26#note1)

Best, Elsdon (1923). "Anthropogeny, solar myths and phallic symbolism: as exemplified in the demiurgic concepts of Tane and Tiki", *The Journal of the Polynesian Society*, Vol. 32, No. 126, Pp. 53-69. Retrieved 22 November, 2010, from [http://www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/document/Volume\\_32\\_1923/Volume\\_32,\\_No.\\_126](http://www.jps.auckland.ac.nz/document/Volume_32_1923/Volume_32,_No._126)

Beumont, Pierre (2007). *Anorexia nervosa is a serious disease*. Retrieved September 4, 2008, from [http://www.edf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/pdf\\_an\\_serious\\_disease\\_2003.pdf](http://www.edf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/pdf_an_serious_disease_2003.pdf)

Bigelow, John (2006). *Metaphysics in Australia*. Retrieved December 15, 2006, from <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/philosopherszone/stories/2006/1804477.htm#transcript>

Birch, Charles (1995). *Feelings*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press.

Bordo, Susan (1987). *The flight to objectivity: Essays on Cartesianism and culture*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Bordo, Susan (1993). *Unbearable weight: Feminism, western culture, and the body*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Boskind-Lodahl, Marlene (1976). "Cinderella's stepsisters: A feminist perspective on anorexia nervosa and bulimia", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 2, pp. 343-356.

- Brain, Josephine (2002). "Unsettling 'body image': Anorexic body narratives and the materialization of the 'body imaginary'". *Feminist Theory*, 3, 151. doi: 10.1177/1464700102003002342
- Brook, Andrew (2008) "Kant's view of the mind and consciousness of self", *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved November 12, 2008, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/kant-mind/#1>
- Bruch, Hilde (1974). *Eating disorders: Obesity, anorexia nervosa, and the person within*. London: Routledge.
- Bruch, Hilde (Czyzewski, D. & Suhr, M. (Eds.), 1988). *Conversations with anorexics*. New York: Basic Books.
- Bruch, Hilde (2001, [1978]). *The golden cage: The enigma of anorexia nervosa*. New York: Vintage.
- Brumberg, Joan (1988). *Fasting girls: The history of anorexia nervosa*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Bulik, Cynthia (2001). "Features of childhood sexual abuse and the development of psychiatric and substance use disorders", *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 179, pp. 444-449.
- Burawoy, Michael (1998). "The extended case method", *Sociological Theory*, 16:1. Retrieved March 17, 2012, from <http://cue.berkeley.edu/ecm.pdf>
- Burns, Maree (2004). "Eating like an ox: Femininity and dualistic constructions of Bulimia and Anorexia". *Feminism and Psychology*, 14, 269. doi: 10.1177/0959353504042182
- Burns, Steven (2004). "Sex and solipsism: Weininger's *On last things*". In Stern, D. (Ed.), *Wittgenstein reads Weininger* (pp. 89-111). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Burkitt, Ian (1998). "Sexuality and gender identity: from a discursive to a relational analysis", *The Sociological Review*. Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 483-504.
- Butler, Judith (1990). *Gender trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of 'sex'*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Butler, Judith (1997). *The psychic life of power: Theories in subjection*. Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press.
- Carolan, Fidelma & Redmond, Sharon (2003). *The needs of young people in Northern Ireland who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender (LGBT)*. Retrieved August 4, 2011, from [http://www.belongto.org/attachments/233\\_shOUT\\_Main\\_Report.pdf](http://www.belongto.org/attachments/233_shOUT_Main_Report.pdf)



- Chalmers, David (1996). *The conscious mind: In search of a fundamental theory*. New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Chalmers, David & Chrucky, Andrew (1998). *Much ado about consciousness*. Retrieved July 10, 2011, from <http://www.ditext.com/chalmers/chalm.html>
- Chamberlain, David (1998). *The mind of your newborn baby*. Berkeley: North Atlantic books.
- Chernin, Kim (1983). *Womansize: The tyranny of slenderness*. London: The Women's Press.
- Chesler, Phyllis (2005, [1972]). *Women and madness*. New York: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Chivers, M., Rieger, G., Latty E. & Bailey, J. (2004). "A sex difference in the specificity of sexual arousal", *Psychological Science* 15: 736–744. Retrieved August 22, 2011, from [http://www.psychologicalscience.org/pdf/ps/sex\\_difference.pdf](http://www.psychologicalscience.org/pdf/ps/sex_difference.pdf)
- Conway, M. A. (2005). Memory and the self. *Journal of Memory and Language*, 53, 594-628.
- Cummings, Jeffrey & Mega, Michael (2003). *Neuropsychiatry and behavioural neuroscience*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Daly, Mary (1991, [1978]). *Gyn/Ecology*. London: The Women's Press.
- Darwin, Charles (1985, [1859]). *The origin of species*. Harmondsworth & New York: Penguin.
- De Beauvoir, Simone (trans. & ed. Parshley, H.M., 1953). *The second sex*. London: Cape.
- De Ras, Marion (1997). "Maiden diseases' and the pathologising of female puberty and adolescence". In De Ras, M. & Grace, V. (Eds.), *Bodily boundaries, sexualised genders & medical discourses* (pp. 110-123). Palmerston North: The Dunmore Press.
- Delys, Sherre (Producer, 2007). 'The starving brain', *All in the mind* [radio]. Australia: ABC Radio National.
- Denzin, Norman (1994). "The art and politics of interpretation", in Denzin, N. & Lincoln, Y. (eds.). *Handbook of qualitative research*. London & New Delhi: Sage, pp. 500-515.
- Derrida, Jacques (trans. Harlow, B., 1979). *Spurs: Nietzsche's Styles*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Derrida, Jacques (trans. Spivak, G. C., 1998, [1974]). *Of Grammatology*. Baltimore & London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Derrida, Jacques (trans. Bass, A., 1981). *Positions*. London: Continuum.
- Descartes, René (trans. Sutcliffe, F.E., 1968). *Discourse on method and the meditations*. London & New York: Penguin.

- Descartes, René (trans. Cottingham, J. & Murdoch, D., 1984). *The philosophical writings of Descartes*, 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Diogenes Laertius (trans. Yonge, C.D., 1895) 'Letter to Herodotus'. *Lives of Eminent Philosophers*. Retrieved July 22, 2011, from <http://www.attalus.org/old/diogenes10b.html>
- Duby, Georges & Perrot, Michelle (Eds.), (trans. Goldhammer, A., 1994). *A history of women in the west*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Efron, Sonni (2008). Eating disorders on rise in Asia. Retrieved July 11, 2011, from <http://www.healthplace.com/eating-disorders/main/eating-disorders-on-rise-in-asia/menu-id-58/>
- Egan, Jennifer (2000). *Power suffering*. Retrieved July 12, 2007, from [http://www.jenniferegan.com/articles/1999\\_05\\_16\\_nyt\\_suffer.html](http://www.jenniferegan.com/articles/1999_05_16_nyt_suffer.html)
- Elder, C., Gullion, C., Funk, K., DeBar, L., Lindberg, M. & Stevens, V. (2011). Impact of sleep, screen time, depression and stress on weight change in the intensive weight loss phase of the life study, *International Journal of Obesity* (2011) 1–7. Retrieved July 11, 2011, from <http://timewellness.files.wordpress.com/2011/03/ijo-2011-60.pdf>
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne (1999). *Sexing the body: How biologists construct human sexuality*. Retrieved January 28, 2009, from <http://www.symposion.com/ijt/gilbert/sterling.htm>
- Feinstein, David & Church, Dawson (2010). "Modulating gene expression through Psychotherapy: The contribution of non-Invasive somatic interventions." *Review of General Psychology*. Retrieved July 4, 2011, from [http://www.energypsyched.com/gene-expression/EP\\_and\\_Gene\\_Expression5.pdf](http://www.energypsyched.com/gene-expression/EP_and_Gene_Expression5.pdf)
- Feldman, M.B. & Meyer, I.H. (2007). "Eating disorders in diverse lesbian, gay, and bisexual populations." *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 40 (3). 218-226. doi: 10.1002/eat
- Fenton, Liz & Te Koutua, Te Wera (2000). "Four Maori korero about their experience of mental illness". Retrieved June 30, 2011, from <http://www.hawaii.edu/hivandaids/Four%20Maori%20Korero%20About%20Their%20Experience%20of%20Mental%20Illness.pdf>
- Foucault, Michel (1970). *The order of things*. New York: Random House.
- Foucault, Michel (trans. Sheridan, A., 1995, [1977]). *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison*. New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, Michel (ed. Gordon, C., 1980). *Power/Knowledge: Selected interviews and other writings*. Sussex: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, Michel (1986). 'The care of the self'. In *The history of sexuality* Vol. 3, New York: Vintage.
- Foucault, Michel (ed. Rabinow, P., 1991). *The Foucault reader*. London: Penguin Books.

- Freud, Sigmund (trans. Strachey, J., 1953-74). *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. London: Hogarth.
- Friedan, Betty (1965, [1963]). *The feminine mystique*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Frye, Marilyn (1996). "The necessity of differences: Constructing a positive category of women," in *Signs: Journal of women in culture and society*, Vol.21, No.4, Summer, 991-1010.
- Fuss, Diana (1989). *Essentially speaking: Feminism, nature and difference*. New York: Routledge.
- Gage, Matilda Joslyn (1980, [1893]). *Woman, church and state*. Watertown: Persephone Press.
- Garner, David (1997). "The 1997 body image survey results". *Psychology Today*, 30, 30-41.
- Gillett, Grant (2009, [1999]). *The mind and its discontents*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gilman, Charlotte Perkins (1899). *The Yellow Wallpaper*. Retrieved January 18, 2012, from <http://etext.lib.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/GilYell.html>
- Gilmour, David (2001). *Misogyny: The male malady*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Goldie, W.H. (1904). *Maori medical lore*. Retrieved November 22, 2010, from [http://rsnz.natlib.govt.nz/volume/rsnz\\_37/rsnz\\_37\\_00\\_000230.html](http://rsnz.natlib.govt.nz/volume/rsnz_37/rsnz_37_00_000230.html)
- Gordon, Richard (2000, [1990]). *Eating disorders: Anatomy of a social epidemic*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Gottlieb, Gilbert (2000). Behavioral and environmental influences on gene activity. *Current directions in psychological science*, 9, 93-97.
- Graham, Daniel (2007). "Heraclitus", *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved May 25, 2008, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/heraclitus/>
- Gramsci, Antonio (trans. Buttigieg, J.A. & Callari, A., 1992). *Prison notebooks*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Green, Anna (2004). 'Unpacking' the stories. In Green, A. & Hutching, M. (Eds.), *Remembering: Writing oral history* (pp. 90-103). Auckland: Auckland University Press.
- Greer, Germaine (1971). *The female eunuch*. London: Paladin.
- Griffin, J., and Berry, E.M. (2003). "A modern day holy anorexia? Religious language in advertising and anorexia nervosa in the West", *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 57, pp. 43-51.

Grosz, Elizabeth (1990). "Contemporary theories of power and subjectivity". In Gunew, S. (Ed.), *Feminist knowledge: Critique and construct* (pp. 59-120). London & New York: Routledge.

Grosz, Elizabeth (1994). *Volatile Bodies: Towards a corporeal feminism*. St. Leonards, N.S.W.: Allen & Unwin.

Gull, William (1874). "Anorexia nervosa (apepsia hysterica, anorexia hysterica)", *Transactions of the Clinical Society of London*, 7: 22-28.

Guthrie, W. K. C. (1967, [1950]). *The Greek philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle*. London: Methuen.

Halmi, Katherine (1992). *Psychobiology and treatment of anorexia nervosa and bulimia nervosa*. Washington DC: American Psychiatric Press.

Halse, C., Honey A., & Boughtwood, D., "The paradox of virtue: (re)thinking deviance, anorexia and schooling", *Gender and Education*, Vol. 19, No.2, March 2007, pp. 219-235.

Haraway, Donna (1991). *Simians, cyborgs and women: The Reinvention of nature*. New York: Routledge.

Harding, Sandra (1986). *The science question in feminism*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Haslanger, Sally (1993). "On being objective and being objectified". In Antony, L. and Witt, C. (Eds.), *A mind of one's own: Feminist essays in reason and subjectivity* (pp. 85-125). Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press.

Haslanger, Sally (2007). "Feminist metaphysics", *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved September 20, 2007, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-metaphysics/>

Hemler, Jennifer (2007, unpublished). "The medicalization of compulsive shopping: A sociological analysis of a disorder-in-the-making". Retrieved September 28, 2009, from [http://sociology.rutgers.edu/DOCUMENTS/conf\\_papers/Hemler\\_Jennifer.pdf](http://sociology.rutgers.edu/DOCUMENTS/conf_papers/Hemler_Jennifer.pdf)

Heraclitus (trans. Patrick, G.T.W., 1889). *The fragments of the work of Heraclitus of Ephesus on nature*. Retrieved April 12, 2010, from <http://classicpersuasion.org/pw/heraclitus/herpate.htm>

Heraclitus (trans. Kahn, C. H., 1979). *The art and thought of Heraclitus*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.

Herman, Barbara (1993). *The practice of moral judgement*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Hirsh, Elizabeth and Olson, Gary. (trans. Hirsh, E. & Brulotte, G., 1996) "Je – Luce Irigaray": A Meeting with Luce Irigaray. *JAC*, 16, 3. Retrieved March 21, 2012, from <http://www.jaconlinejournal.com/archives/vol16.3/hirsch-irigaray.pdf>

Hollingdale, R. J. (1996). "The hero as outsider". In B. Magnus & K. M. Higgins (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Nietzsche* (pp. 71-89). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

hooks, bell (1984). *Feminist theory: From margin to centre*. Boston Mass.: South End Press.

Husserl, Edmund (trans. Sheehan, T., 1927) *Phenomenology*. Retrieved March 24, 2011 from <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/relstud/faculty/sheehan.bak/EHtrans/5-eb.pdf>

Husserl, Edmund (trans. Boyce Gibson, W. R., 1931). *Ideas*. London: Allen and Unwin.

Husserl, Edmund (1935). *Philosophy and the crisis of European man*. Retrieved August 15, 2011, from <http://www.scribd.com/doc/18597215/Husserl-Philosophy-and-the-Crisis-of-European-Man-1935>

Husserl, Edmund (trans. Alston, W. P. & Narhnikian, G., 1964). *The idea of phenomenology*. The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff.

Husserl, Edmund (trans. Carr, D., 1970). *The crisis of European sciences and transcendental phenomenology; an introduction to phenomenological philosophy*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.

Husserl, Edmund (trans. Sheehan, T., 1997). "Phenomenology". In T. Sheehan & R. Palmer (Eds.), *Psychological and transcendental phenomenology*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Insel, Thomas (2006). Letter to National Eating Disorders Association. Retrieved March 12, 2009, from <http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/nedaDir/files/documents/NIMHLetter.pdf>

Irigaray, Luce (1981). 'Nietzsche, Freud and women', *Le Corps-a-corps avec la mère* Montréal: Les Editions de la pleine lune.

Irigaray, Luce (trans. Porter, C. & Burke, C., 1985a). *This sex which is not one*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, Luce (trans. Gill, G., 1985b). *Speculum of the other: Woman*. Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press.

Irigaray, Luce (trans. Gill, G., 1991). *Marine lover of Friedrich Nietzsche*. New York & Oxford: Columbia University Press.

Irigaray, Luce (ed. Whitford, M., 1991). *The Irigaray Reader*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Irigaray, Luce (trans. Collie, J. & Still, J., 1992). *Passions Elementaires*. New York: Routledge.

Irigaray, Luce (trans. Bostik, H. & Pluháček, S., 2002). *The way of love*. London: Continuum.

Irigaray, Luce (2004). *Key writings*. New York & London: Continuum.

- Irigaray, Luce (2008). *Sharing the world*. London & New York: Continuum
- Jackson, Carolyn (2006). *Lads and ladettes in school: Gender and a fear of failure*. Berkshire: Open University Press.
- Jaco, I., et al. (2008). "Centromeres cross over, a lot." *The Journal of Cell Biology*, June 9. Doi: [10.1083/jcb.1816iti5](https://doi.org/10.1083/jcb.1816iti5)
- Janet, Pierre (trans. Adamowicz, M., 2010, [1903]). *The obsessions and the psychasthenia*. Retrieved August 4, 2011, from <http://www.dmgrad.com/?p=177>
- Janet, Pierre (1907). *The major symptoms of hysteria*. New York: Macmillan.
- Kant, Immanuel (trans. Kemp Smith, N., 1929). *Immanuel Kant's critique of pure reason*. London: Macmillan.
- Kant, Immanuel (trans. Goldthwait, J. T., 1960). *Observations on the feeling of the beautiful and sublime*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kant, Immanuel (trans. Gregor, M., 1991). *Metaphysics of morals*. Cambridge & New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Kant, Immanuel (trans. Wood, A.W., 2002). *Groundwork for the metaphysics of morals* [electronic resource]. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Keller, Evelyn Fox (1985). *Reflections on gender and science*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press.
- Kheel, Marti (1993). "From heroic to holistic ethics: The ecofeminist challenge". In Gaard, G. (Ed.), *Ecofeminism: Women, animals and nature* (pp. 243-271). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- Kirby, Vicki (1997). *Telling flesh: The substance of the corporeal*. New York & London: Routledge.
- Kripke, Saul (1981, [1972]). *Naming and necessity*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Kusch, Martin (2007) "Psychologism", *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved January 7, 2009, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/psychologism/>
- Lacan, Jacques (trans. Sheridan, A., 1977a). *The four fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis*. London: Hogarth Press.
- Lacan, Jacques (trans. Sheridan, A., 1977b). *Ecrits*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Lacan, Jacques (trans. Rose, J., 1982). In Mitchell, J. & Rose, J. (Eds.), *Feminine sexuality: Jacques Lacan and* . London: Macmillan.

- Laing, Ronald (1975). *The politics of experience and the bird of paradise*. London: Penguin.
- Lapp, April & LeCroy, Craig (2006). "Eating disorders and adolescent girls: Implications from a developmental perspective". In Kindes, M. (Ed.), *Body image: New research* (pp. 109-130). New York: Nova Science Publishers.
- Lasègue, Charles (1873). "On hysterical anorexia". *Medical Times and Gazette*, 2, 265-266.
- Lawlor, Leonard (2006). "Jacques Derrida", *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved June 10, 2008, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/derrida/>
- Lawrence, Marilyn (1984). *The anorexic experience*. London: The Women's Press.
- Lemoine-Luccioni, Eugénie (trans. Davenport, M. & Réguis, M., 1987). *The dividing of women or women's lot*. London: Free Association Press.
- Lester, Rebecca. "The (dis)embodied self in anorexia nervosa". *Social Science & Medicine*, Volume 44, Issue 4, February 1997, pp. 479-489.
- Lipton, Bruce (2001a). "Insight into Cellular Consciousness". *Bridges* (ISSEEM Org.) 12, (1), pp. 5-9.
- Lipton, Bruce (2001b). "Nature, nurture and human development". *Journal of prenatal and perinatal Psychology and Health*, 16:167-180.
- Lipton, Bruce (2007). *Mind over genes: The new biology*. Retrieved July 4, 2011, from <http://www.bruce-lipton.com/articles/mind-over-genes-the-new-biology/>
- Liu, Aimee (1979). *Solitaire*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Livius, Titus (trans. Bettenson, H., 1976). *Rome and the Mediterranean: Books XXXI-XLV of the History of Rome*, Radice, B. (ed.). New York: Penguin.
- Lloyd, Genevieve (1984). *The man of reason: 'male' and 'female' in western philosophy*. London: Methuen.
- Lloyd, Genevieve (1999). "Reason as attainment". In Bordo, S. (Ed.), *Feminist interpretations of René Descartes* (pp. 70-81). University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Locke, John (ed. Nidditch, P., 1975). *An essay concerning human understanding*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Locke, John (1980). *Two Treatises of civil government: The second treatise*. McPherson, C. B. (ed.), Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing.
- Lovejoy, Meg (2001). "Disturbances in the social body: Differences in body image and eating problems among African American and White women", *Gender & Society*, 15.2, 239-261.

- Lugones, Maria (2003). *Pilgrimages/Peregrinages*. Oxford: Roman Littlefield.
- Lyon, Maureen, Silber, Jose & Atkins, Darlene (2005). "Process, Promise, and Pitfalls of Collaborative Treatment of Anorexia Nervosa in an Adolescent Patient", *Clinical Case Studies*, 4; 189. doi: 10.1177/1534650103259766
- Malson, Helen (1998) *The thin woman*. London: Routledge.
- Margolis, Karen (1988). *To eat or not to eat*. London: Camden Press.
- McBride K. & Fortenberry D. (2010). Heterosexual anal sexuality and anal sex behaviors: a review, *The Journal of Sex Research*. Retrieved July 18, 2011, from <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Heterosexual+anal+sexuality+and+anal+sex+behaviors%3A+a+review.-a0226161872>
- McCann, Edwin (1994). "Locke's philosophy of body". In Chappell, V. (Ed.), *The Cambridge companion to Locke* (pp. 56-88). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- McClintock, Barbara (1929). "Chromosome morphology in *Zea mays*". *Science* 69, 629.
- McDonough, Richard (2004). "Wittgenstein, German Organicism, chaos and the center of Life." *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. Vol. 42, no. 3 (July), 297-326.
- McGowan, P., Sasaki, A., Huang, T., Unterberger, A., Suderman, M., et al (2008). "Promoter-Wide Hypermethylation of the Ribosomal RNA Gene Promoter in the Suicide Brain", *PLoS ONE* 3(5): e2085. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0002085.
- McWhorter, Ladelle (1999). *Bodies and pleasures: Foucault and the politics of sexual normalization*. Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press.
- Mead, Hirini Moko (2003). *Tikanga Māori: Living by Māori values*. Wellington: Huia Publishers.
- Mellin, L. M., Scully, S., & Irwin, C. E. (1986). *Disordered eating characteristics in preadolescent girls*. Paper presented at the American Dietetic Association Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NV.
- Mendelson, Michael (2000). "Saint Augustine", *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved January 18, 2008, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/augustine/>
- Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand (2002). *Anorexia nervosa*. Auckland: M.H.I.N.Z.
- Michel, Deborah and Willard, Susan (2003). *When dieting becomes dangerous*. Newhaven & London: Yale University Press.
- Miles, Margaret "Review: From ascetics to anorexics". *The women's review of books*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (Nov., 1987), pp. 22-23



Minuchin, Salvador & Fishman, Charles (2004). *Family Therapy Techniques*. Harvard University Press.

Mitchell, Natasha (2006). "The mind-body problem down under", *All in the mind*. Retrieved December 27, 2007, from <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/allinthemind/stories/2007/1812794.htm>

Moi, Toril (1985a). *Sexual/textual politics: Feminist literary theory*. London: Methuen.

Moi, Toril (1985b). "Representations of patriarchy: Sex and epistemology in Freud's *Dora*", in Bernheimer, C., & Kahane, C., (eds.), *In Dora's case: Freud – Hysteria – Feminism*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Moore, G. E. (1993) *G. E. Moore: Selected writings*, Baldwin, T. (ed.). London: Routledge.

Mustanski, B.S., Dupree, M. G., Nievergelt, C., Schork, N. J. & Hamer, D. H. (2005). "A genomewide linkage scan of male sexual orientation", *Human Genetics*, 116, 272-278.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (trans. Hollingdale, R.J., 1969, [1961]). *Thus spoke Zarathustra*. London & New York: Penguin Books.

Nietzsche, Friedrich, (trans. Kaufmann, W. & Hollingdale, R.J., 1967). *On the Genealogy of Morals*. New York: Vintage.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (trans. Cowan, M., 1996, [1962]). *Philosophy in the tragic age of the Greeks*. Washington: Regnery Publishing.

Nietzsche, Friedrich (trans. Kaufmann, W., 1976, [1954]). *The Portable Nietzsche*. New York & London: Penguin.

Nye, Andrea (2004). *Feminism and modern philosophy: An introduction*. New York: Routledge.

Oakley, Anne (1981). "Interviewing women: A contradiction in terms". In Roberts, H. (ed.), *Doing feminist research* (pp. 30-61). London: Routledge.

Oliver, Kelly (1995). *Womanizing Nietzsche: Philosophy's relation to the feminine*. London & New York: Routledge.

Orbach, Susie (1986). *Hunger strike: The anorectic's struggle as a metaphor for our age*. New York: W. W. Norton.

Osborne, Peter and Segal, Lynne (1993). *Extracts from gender as performance: An interview with Judith Butler*. Retrieved December 22, 2007, from <http://www.theory.org.uk/butint1.htm>

Page, David (2003). "The male-specific region of the human Y chromosome is a mosaic of discrete sequence classes", *Nature*, 423, pp. 825-837.

- Pai, Anna (1984, [1974]). *Foundations of Genetics: A science for society*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Pateman, Carole (1988). *Sexual contract*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Pearsall, Paul (1998). *The heart's code*. New York: Broadway Books.
- Philipse, Herman (1995). "Transcendental idealism". In Smith, B. & Smith, D. W. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Husserl* (pp. 239-322). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Philo (trans. Colson, F.H. & Whitaker, G.H., 1929). *Philo*. London: Heinemann.
- Pillemer, David (2001). Momentous events and the life story. *Review of General Psychology*, 5(2), 123-134
- Place, Ullin (1956). Is consciousness a brain process?, *British Journal of Psychology*, 47, 44-50.
- Plato (trans. Lee, H. D. P. , 1965). *Timaeus*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Plato (trans. Guthrie, W. K. C., 1971). *Meno*. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill.
- Plato (trans. Waterfield, R., 1994). *The Republic*. Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Plato (trans. Taylor, A. E., 1960). *The Laws*. London: Dent.
- Playfair, William (1888). 'Note on the so-called "anorexia nervosa"', *Lancet*, April, pp. 817-818.
- Pochon, C. & Rothschild, A. (Producers, 2009). *La Face Cachée Des Fesses* (The Hidden Side of the Bottom) [Documentary]. Paris: Arte France.
- Price, T., Goetz, K. & Lovell, M. (2004). "Neuropsychiatric aspects of brain tumours", In Yudofsky, S. & Hales, R. (Eds.), *Essentials of neuropsychiatry and clinical neurosciences*. Arlington: American Psychiatric Publishing.
- Raymond of Capua (1853). *The life of St. Catharine of Siena*. Retrieved 11 July, 2011, from <http://www.archive.org/details/lifeofstcatharin00raymuoft>
- Rodis-Lewis, Geneviève (1998). "Descartes and the unity of the human being". In Cottingham, J. (Ed.), *Descartes* (pp. 197-210). Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press.
- Rothenberg, Albert (1990). "Adolescence and Eating Disorder: The Obsessive Compulsive Syndrome", *Psychiatric Clinics of North America* 13: 469-487.
- Rubin, Herbert & Irene (1995). *Qualitative interviewing: The art of hearing data*. London: Sage.

- Rubin, Gayle (2000). "The traffic in women: Notes on the 'political economy' of sex". In Kolmar, W. & Bartowski, F. (Eds.), *Feminist theory: A reader* (pp. 228-242). Mountain View, CA: Mayfield.
- Rumney, Avis (2009, [1983]). *Dying to please: Anorexia, treatment and recovery*. Jefferson, NC & London: McFarland & Co.
- Russell, Gerald (1977). "The present status of anorexia nervosa", *Psychological Medicine*, August, 7(3), pp. 363–367.
- Russell, Gerald (1979). "Bulimia nervosa: An ominous variant of anorexia nervosa", *Psychological Medicine*, August, 9(3), pp. 429-48.
- Russell, Bertrand (1912). *The problems of philosophy*. London: Oxford University Press.
- Russell, Bertrand (1986). *The philosophy of logical atomism and other essays*. Slater, J. G. (Ed.). London & Boston: Allen & Unwin.
- Sachs, Joe (2006). 'Aristotle', *The Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved July 26, 2007, from <http://www.iep.utm.edu/a/aris-met.htm>
- Sandford, Stella (2010). *Plato and sex*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Sarantakos, Sotirios (1998). *Social research*, pp. 41-55. South Yarra: Macmillan.
- Sartre, Jean-Paul (trans. Barnes, H. E., 1976). *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. London: Methuen.
- Saugstad, Andreas (2001) "Saul Kripke: Genius logician", *Go inside*. Retrieved May 18, 2008, from <http://goinside.com/01/2/kripke.html>
- Sayer, Andrew (1997). "Essentialism, social constructionism and beyond", *The Sociological Review*. Oxford and Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 453-486.
- Scheman, Naomi (1993). "Though this be method, yet there is madness in it: Paranoia and liberal epistemology". In Antony, L. and Witt, C. (Eds.), *A mind of one's own: Feminist essays in reason and subjectivity* (pp. 145-170). Colorado & Oxford: Westview Press.
- Scheman, Naomi (1996). "Forms of life: Mapping the rough ground". In Sluga, H. and Stern, D.G. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Wittgenstein* (pp. 383-410). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Schmidt, U., Lee, S., Beecham, J. *et al* (2007). "Family therapy does not improve outcomes in adolescents compared to CBT guided self-care", *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 164:591–8.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur (trans. Hollingdale, R.J., 1970). *Essays and aphorisms*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Schopenhauer, Arthur (trans. Payne, E. J. F., 1966). *The world as will and representation*. New York: Dover Publications.

Schopenhauer, Arthur (trans. Haldane, R. B. & Kemp, J., 1964). *The world as will and idea*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Schor, Juliet (1993). *The Overworked American: The unexpected decline of leisure*. New York: Basic Books.

Schor, Naomi (1994). "Introduction" and "This essentialism which is not one: Coming to grips with Irigaray". In Schor, N. & Weed, E. (Eds.), *The essential difference* (pp. 40-62). Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Schulte, Brigid (2011, April 29). More women have ADHD...or is it the stress of modern life? *Washington Post*. Retrieved July 10, 2011, from [http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/more-women-have-adhd--or-is-it-the-stress-of-modern-life/2011/04/08/AFx1Vo8E\\_story.html](http://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/magazine/more-women-have-adhd--or-is-it-the-stress-of-modern-life/2011/04/08/AFx1Vo8E_story.html)

Schrift, Alan (1996). "Nietzsche's French legacy". In Magnus, B. & Higgins, K. M. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Nietzsche* (pp. 323-355). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky (1992). "Gender criticism". In Greenblatt, S. & Gunn, G. (Eds.), *Redrawing the boundaries: The Transformation of English and American Literary Studies* (pp. 271-302). New York: MLA.

Seppä, Anita (2004). "Foucault, enlightenment and the aesthetics of the self", *Contemporary Aesthetics*. Retrieved May 22, 2007, from <http://www.contempaesthetics.org/newvolume/pages/article.php?articleID=244>

Shepherdson, Charles (2000). *Vital signs: Nature, culture, psychoanalysis*. New York & London: Routledge.

Sheinberg, Marcia & Fraenkel, Peter (2001). *The relational trauma of incest: A family-based approach to treatment*. New York: Guilford Press.

Shorter, Edward (1987). "The first great increase in anorexia nervosa", *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 21, No.1 (Autumn), pp. 69-96

Silverman, Joseph (1997). "Anorexia Nervosa: Historical perspective on treatment". In Garner, D. & Garfinkel, P. (Eds.), *Handbook of treatment for eating disorders* (pp. 3-10). New York: Guilford Press.

Smart, J.J.C. (1963). *Philosophy and scientific realism*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Smith, David Woodruff (1995). "Mind and body". In Smith, B. & Smith, D. W. (Eds.), *The Cambridge companion to Husserl* (pp. 323-393). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Smith, Robin (2000). 'Aristotle's Logic', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved February 5, 2008, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/aristotle-logic/>

- Soliah, LuAnn (2009) "Dieting behaviours of young women post-college graduation", *College Student Journal*. FindArticles.com. Retrieved July 23, 2009, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0FCR/is\\_4\\_41/ai\\_n27484196/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0FCR/is_4_41/ai_n27484196/)
- Stumpf, Samuel (1993). *Socrates to Sartre: A history of philosophy* (5<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Szasz, Thomas (1961). *The myth of mental illness: Foundations of a theory of personal conduct*. New York: Hoeber-Harper.
- Szmukler, George & Tatum, Digby, "Anorexia Nervosa: Starvation dependence", *British journal of medical psychology* 57 (1984), 303-310.
- Szyf M., Weaver I., & Meaney M. (2007). Maternal care, the epigenome and phenotypic differences in behavior. *Reprod Toxicol*. July, 24(1):9-19. Retrieved July 6, 2011, from <http://www.psych.yorku.ca/smurtha/courses/2240/documents/Meaneyepigenetic.pdf>
- Talleyrand, Regine (2006). Potential stressors contributing to eating disorder symptoms in African American women: implications for mental health counselors. *Journal of Mental Health Counseling*. Retrieved July 11, 2011, from [http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_hb1416/is\\_4\\_28/ai\\_n29304652/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_hb1416/is_4_28/ai_n29304652/)
- Taylor, Steven and Bogdan, Robert (1998). *Introduction to qualitative research methods: A guidebook and resource* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: John Wiley.
- Te Awekotuku, Ngahuia (1991). *Mana Wahine Māori: Selected writing on Māori women's art, culture and politics*. Auckland: New Women's Press Ltd.
- Tiemeyer, Matthew (2009). *The Maudsley Method: A no-blame, family treatment approach for anorexia*. Retrieved August 27, 2009, from <http://eatingdisorders.about.com/od/treatmentstrategies/p/maudsleymethod.htm>
- Thomasson, Amie (2009). "Categories". *Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. Retrieved September 4, 2011, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/categories/>
- Thompson, Becky (1994). *A hunger so wide and so deep: A multiracial view of women's eating problems*. Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press.
- Thompson, Becky (1996). Multiracial feminist theorizing about eating problems: Refusing to rank oppressions. *Eating Disorders*, 4, (2), 104-114.
- Van Wormer, K. & Davis, D. R. (2008, [2003]). *Addiction treatment: A strengths perspective*. Belmont, CA: Thompson Brooks/Cole.
- Waller, J., Kaufman, R., & Deutsch, F., "Anorexia Nervosa: A psychosomatic entity". *Psychosomatic Medicine*, Vol II, No.1, January, 1940. Retrieved May 22, 2009, from <http://www.psychosomaticmedicine.org/cgi/reprint/2/1/3>
- Wardle, Louise (Producer/Director, 1999). *Germaine Greer: Close to the bone* [Documentary]. Poole, M. (Ed.). Scotland: *Closeup*, BBC Production.

- Weedon, Chris. (1997, [1987]). *Feminist practice and poststructuralist theory*. Oxford & Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers Ltd.
- Weigel, Sigfried (1996). *Body- and image-Space: Re-reading Walter Benjamin*. London & New York: Routledge.
- Wentz, E., Gillberg I.C., Anckarsäter, H., Gillberg, C., Råstam, M. (2009). “Adolescent-onset anorexia nervosa: 18-year outcome”. *The British Journal of Psychiatry*, 194: 168-174. doi: 10.1192/bjpp.107.048686
- White, Michael & Epston, David (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: W. W. Norton
- Whitelaw, Emma (2006). Epigenetics: Sins of the fathers, and their fathers. *European Journal of Human Genetics*, 14, 131–132. doi:10.1038/sj.ejhg.5201567
- Wicks, Robert (2007). ‘Arthur Schopenhauer’, *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Retrieved February 14, 2009, from <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/schopenhauer/>
- Williamson, Charlotte (2011). Andrej Pejic: Who’s that boy? *The Telegraph*. Retrieved March 6, 2011, from <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/celebritynews/8335719/Andrej-Pejic-Whos-that-boy.html>
- Witt, Charlotte (1989). *Substance and essence in Aristotle: An interpretation of Metaphysics VII -IX*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Witt, Charlotte (1996) “How feminism is re-writing the philosophical canon”. Retrieved December 2, 2007, from <http://www.uh.edu/~cfreelan/SWIP/Witt.html>
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig (trans. Pears, D.F. & McGuinness, B. F., 1961). *Tractatus logico-philosophicus*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Wohl, Victoria (2005). “Beyond sexual difference: Becoming-woman in Euripides’ *Bacchae*”. In Pedrick, V. & Oberhelman, S. M. (Eds.), *The soul of tragedy: Essays on Athenian drama* (pp. 137-154). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Young-Bruehl, Elisabeth (1998). *Subject to biography: Psychoanalysis, feminism, and writing women’s lives*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Zuckerman, Marvin (2005, [1991]). *Psychobiology of personality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

\*\*\*\*\*