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Feminist Responses to Freud through the "Equality vs. Difference" Debate: Revisiting Beauvoir, Irigaray and Mitchell

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Abstract

Freudian psychoanalysis has long been a matter of debate among feminists, and usually criticized for biological determinism. While discussing the Freudian framework, feminists have also been discussing how to define a female subject and the age old "equality vs. difference" discussion. This study discusses critical feminist responses to Freud which demonstrate the intricacies of the "equality vs. difference" debate amongst different strands of feminist theory. This article analyses three diverse lines of argument regarding psychoanalysis and the equality vs. difference debate by focusing on the works of Luce Irigaray, Simone de Beauvoir and Juliet Mitchell. Beauvoir and Irigaray both criticize the Freudian approach for taking "the male" as the real, essential subject. However, whereas Beauvoir sides with an egalitarian feminism, Irigaray defends underlining the difference of female sexuality. Juliet Mitchell, on the other hand, defends Freudian psychoanalysis through the argument that psychoanalysis actually offers a way to understand how the unconscious carries the heritage of historical and social reality. Accordingly, what Freudian psychoanalysis does is to analyze, rather than to legitimize, the basis of the patriarchal order in the unconscious.

Keywords*: Feminist theory, Freud, Freudian psychoanalysis, equality-difference debate, patriarchy, Beauvoir, Irigaray, Juliet Mitchell*

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"Eşitlik – Farklılık" Tartışması Ekseninde Freud'a Feminist Yanıtlar: Beauvoir, Irigaray ve Mitchell'i Yeniden Okumak

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Öz

Freudyen psikanaliz, feminist teorinin farklı yaklaşımları çerçevesinde çokça tartışılmış, özellikle de biyolojik determinizmi savunmakla eleştirilmiştir. Aslında feminist teorisyenler, Freud'un analiz çerçevesini tartışırken aynı zamanda dişi öznelliğin nasıl tanımlanabileceğini, ve "eşitlik/farklılık" eksenindeki farklı feminist argümanları da tartışmaktadırlar. Bu çalışma, Freud'a feminist eleştirileri, feminist teorinin farklı kanatları arasındaki farkı belirlemekte en etkin tartışma olan eşitlik / farklılık tartışması ekseninde incelemektedir. Çalışma, bu çerçevede, Luce Irigaray, Simone de Beauvoir ve Juliet Mitchell'in çalışmalarına odaklanarak, Freudyen psikanalize üç farklı feminist yaklaşımın analizini yapmaktadır. Beauvoir ve Irigaray, Freudyen yaklaşımı, erkek özneyi temel ve esas özne olarak aldığı gerekçesiyle eleştirmektedirler. Ancak Beauvoir bu eleştirisinde eşitlikçi feminist argümanlar öne sürerken, Irigaray dişi öznenin farklılığının altını çizmeyi önermektedir. Juliet Mitchell ise, psikanalizin biyolojik determinizme dayandığı savını reddetmekte, Freudyen yaklaşımın tarihsel ve toplumsal gerçekliğin mirasının bilinçaltındaki izdüşümünü anlamamıza yardımcı olduğunu önermektedir. Mitchell'in yaklaşımına göre, Freudyen psikanalizin amacı, bilinçaltındaki ataerkiyi meşrulaştırmak değil, analiz etmektir.

***Anahtar Kelimeler**: Feminist teori, Freud, psikanaliz, eşitlik/farklılık tartışması, ataerki, Beauvoir, Irigaray, Juliet Mitchell*

Introduction

Freudian psychoanalysis has been subjected to a great deal of feminist criticism. Feminist responses to Freud take different positions regarding the perception of women in psychoanalysis: Whereas some emphasize that Freudian psychoanalysis provides feminists with a perfect analysis of patriarchal society, others argue that the psychoanalytic vision of femininity actually reinforces and justifies patriarchy. However, the critical perspectives differ on a major issue: Is there a separate female essence, a specificity that can be attributed to the natural difference between men and women, which arguably has been reduced by Freud to a deficient form of male nature, or is a woman a human being, who is having more difficulty than men in transcending the borders of her nature and in reaching the common ground of *being a human* due to the cultural and social attributions to her sex?

This article is an attempt to review the feminist responses to the Freudian approach, through analyzing three diverse patterns of response in the framework of the equality vs. difference debate. The equality vs. difference debate itself has been criticized for limiting the scope of feminist politics by confining it into a dichotomous framework (Phillips, 1995: 54) and for constructing identity based on a stabilized notion of gender and sex, which renders discontinuous gendered beings as "unintelligible" (Butler, 1999). Indeed, Butler's critique is crucial as it undermines the very fundamental contours of the debate, and argues against the attitude of taking "woman" as a unified category at the expense of excluding multiplicity of genders and sexualities. Nevertheless, understanding the contours of the debate is significant as it provides us with the insight to the major lines of divergence within feminist theory. This debate also draws the major lines of divergence among feminist responses to Freud.

The article focuses on the works of Luce Irigaray, Simone de Beauvoir and Juliet Mitchell. The responses to Freud in Irigaray's Speculum of the Other Woman (1985, originally published in 1974), Beauvoir's The Second Sex (1974, originally published in 1949) and Mitchell's Psychoanalysis and Feminism (1974) are central to the essay. These three works have been chosen due to their diverging approaches to psychoanalysis: Irigaray and Beauvoir both problematize the fact that the subject, the one is the male in the patriarchal order. They are both critical of Freud with regard to this problematic. However, their criticisms of Freud stand on two divergent poles in feminist discourse. This is primarily due to the fact that they dramatically differ on the question of how to define a female subjectivity while holding radically divergent positions on the equality vs. difference debate. Hence, they approach psychoanalysis from contending angles. On the other hand, Juliet Mitchell (1974) undertakes the mission of reconciling feminism and psychoanalysis, suggesting that "Psychoanalysis is not a recommendation for a patriarchal society, but an analysis of one. If we are interested in understanding and challenging the oppression of women, we cannot afford to neglect it" (Mitchell, 1974: xv).

Mitchell's defense of Freud is based on the idea that psychoanalysis has been misunderstood by feminists as "biological determinism" whereas what Freud really aims to do is to show how mental life reflects "what culture has already done with our biological needs" (Mitchell, 1974: 401).

Irigaray and Beauvoir in the Framework of "Saming" vs. "Othering"

Luce Irigaray and Simone de Beauvoir are referred to as two exemplary positions in the feminist debate and there is a general tendency to contextualize them in terms of their relation and opposition to one another. Whereas Beauvoir's The Second Sex is the milestone text of egalitarian feminism, Irigaray is argued to have "restored the movement with prophetic vocation" (Goux, 1994:183) with a strong argument for establishing the difference of female sexuality. Naomi Schor (1994) argues that although both authors share common ground in terms of their concern for the appropriation of subjectivity by men, they differ because their understanding of "subject" and "subjectivity" is different (p.63). For Beauvoir, female subjectivity should be about the activity of transcending the attributes of femininity and reaching universality, whereas for Irigaray, female subjectivity should be defined by a language that marks its sexual difference: "To speak woman is not to speak universal" (Irigaray cited in Schor, 1994:64).

In Beauvoir's analysis, the problem about patriarchy is the attitude of fixing women in the category of the other, rather than perceiving women as the same with men. She condemns "othering" with the argument that patriarchy attributes human abilities of creating and inventing to men, whereas the female is socially, historically and culturally given the mission to repeat and maintain, approximating her to the realm of animals, trapping her in immanence and making her "inessential" (Beauvoir, 1974).

From Beauvoir's perspective, attributing a natural specificity to femininity would harm women's struggle to break away from their immanence and destroy their claim to create and invent on the same ground with men. She is extremely distanced to attributing significance to biological differences; a distance that finds its most explicit expression in her well known statement "One is not born, but rather becomes a woman" (Beauvoir, 1974:295). In that sense, Beauvoir does not argue that the inequality between the sexes is a result of biology. In fact, she would refuse such an argument as biological determinism, and would argue that the female body has been culturally, not biologically constituted as the other (Direk, 2011). For example, in her hostility to maternity, she underlines the cultural constitution as an obstacle to liberty and transcendence: "There is one feminine function that is actually impossible to perform in complete liberty. It is maternity." (Beauvoir, 1974:705). However, Zeynep Direk points out that Beauvoir's account of the female body suffers from the risk abjection of the female body. Whereas Beauvoir, on the one hand aims to reveal "the logic of abjection that underlies the history of male transcendence" (Direk, 2011:64). Her own descriptions of the female body

hint at a logic of abjection and disgust. In her definitions of female biology as almost a nuisance, she declares: "Crisis of puberty and the menopause, monthly 'curse', long and often difficult pregnancy, painful and sometimes dangerous childbirth, illnesses, unexpected symptoms and complications" (Beauvoir, 1974:64).

Beauvoir's perspective has been criticized for being universalist and male oriented, even for promoting a "phallic feminism", especially during the equality vs. difference debate of 1960's and 70's in France, not only by Irigaray but also Julia Kristeva and Helene Cixous; who are referred to as a group of "feminists of difference" (Stavro, 1999). The dramatic opposition between Beauvoir and Irigaray's approaches is explicit in Irigaray's statement in which she, in reference to Beauvoir, claims that "the wish to get rid of sexual difference" is a "call for genocide more radical than any form of destruction there ever has been in human history" (Irigaray, 1991:32).

Irigaray explains her distance to the discourse of "equality between sexes" with the argument that as long as women remain objects of a masculine imaginary, equality only means "becoming a man" (Irigaray, 1991:76). Therefore, in order to be genuinely "equal", the first task is to establish the difference of femininity. In her short text entitled "Equal or Different" (Irigaray, 1991: 30-34), which Irigaray wrote as a response to Beauvoir's "The Second Sex", she argues that demanding equality for women is utopian and based on a superficial critique of culture. "What do women want to be equal to?" she asks, "Men? A wage? Public position? Equal to what? Why not to themselves?" (p.32). Moreover, she comments on the debate over "neutralization of sex" with the argument that such neutralization, if it had been possible, would bring the end of human race. What she suggests for the liberation of women is to emphasize the sexual difference of women, because giving up on woman's sexual identity "represents the greatest possible submission to masculine culture" (Irigaray cited in Goux, 1994). Therefore, liberation of women can only be provided by the "constant passage of the natural into the cultural" (Irigaray, 1991:33). Obviously, she refers to the recognition of the specificity and difference of the female as a positive phenomenon, a reference for which she is generally criticized and labeled as "essentialist". Butler (1999), on the other hand, argues that Irigaray ignores the historical and cultural contexts of sexual difference. Jean-Joseph Goux (1994) defends Irigaray against the criticism of "essentialism" through the argument that emphasizing the difference of femininity does not mean defining an essential, a-historical, fixed femininity. According to Goux, Irigaray does not aim to define a femininity frozen in time, but a femininity that will constantly be constructed and reconstructed (Goux, 1994:182-183).

Judith Butler's comparative analysis of Beauvoir and Irigaray points out that whereas Beauvoir sees the female body to be marked by masculinist discourse as opposed to the unmarked, universal masculine body; Irigaray underlines that the female body is "marked off from the signifiable", and deemed unrepresentable, as "both the marker and the marked are maintained within a masculinist mode of signification" (Butler 1999:18). However, according to

Butler, whereas both Beauvoir's and Irigaray's approaches are invested in a critique of a masculinist signifying economy, they are themselves engaged in "totalizing gestures" of feminism:

> The effort to identify the enemy as singular in form is a reverse-discourse that uncritically mimics the strategy of the oppressor instead of offering a different set of terms" (Butler, 1990:19).

Butler further condemns both Beauvoir and Irigaray for failing to criticize feminism's attitude of taking "women" as a coherent, unified and singular category. Accordingly, this attitude is based on ignoring multiple cultural, social and political ways in which "women" are constructed, and excluding a multiplicity of sexualities.

Challenges to Freud from Two Positions

Luce Irigaray's *Speculum of the Other Woman* starts with head-on challenge to Freud's statements taken from his text *Femininity* in *New Lectures on Psychoanalysis*. The first challenge is directed to Freud's way of representing "the female" as a "dark continent", in Irigaray's terms. According to Freud, woman is the unknown, and "throughout history, people have knocked their heads against the riddle of the nature of femininity" (Freud, 1965:112) because anatomical science suggests that sperm and ovum were probably developed from the same disposition into two different forms, and the mystery of the female cannot be solved "until we have learnt how in general the differentiation of living organisms into two sexes came about" (Freud cited in Irigaray, 1985:20).

According to Irigaray, Freud is defining the feminine in negation to the masculine, in units of value determined by male subjects, because he seems to suggest that the initial single disposition that later developed into two different forms of sexual product, namely sperm and ovum, was originally "the male". Why the female ovum developed, is unknown. Therefore in Freud's account, the characteristics of the female are constantly defined with reference to the idea that femininity is a mystery, and female characteristics can only be defined by taking "the male" as a point of reference. Male "is" (and has always been), female "becomes"; male "has", female does not have (the sex organ); male is "clearly representable", female is the "dark continent" (Irigaray, 1985:22).

Related to the point above, Irigaray draws attention to Freud's statements claiming that "the little girl is actually a little man" (Freud cited in Irigaray, 1985: 25), meaning that in the pre-Oedipal phase, a little girl displays masculine characteristics. She has a clitoris, an undeveloped form of penis, which she approaches with the same intent as a boy approaches his penis; she shows the same kind of aggressiveness, etc., therefore Freud calls this phase "masculine", as well as pre – Oedipal phase. After this phase a little girl discovers her "disadvantages". According to Irigaray, perhaps the most problematic aspect of Freud's work is his perception of women in terms of "atrophies" and "deficiencies" as "disadvantaged men"; as human beings who evolved from

the male origin; becoming a woman also means departing from the origin. Irigaray's main opposition to Freud is that, his theory is not leaving a space for the *feminine*. The main idea in Irigaray's work is not to prove that there are no essential differences between men and women, but to the contrary, to state that the female sex has its own specificity, which is not a deformed form of the male essence.

Moreover, Irigaray criticizes Freud's attitude of drawing parallels between anatomical science and psychological behaviour. In Freud's account, man and woman mime the relationship between sperm and ovum during intercourse. The male sex cell is mobile and active whereas the female ovum waits passively; according to Freud, this is the model for individuals during intercourse. In Irigaray's terms, this argument demonstrates how "anatomical science imposes the truth of its model upon psychological behaviour" (Irigaray, 1985:15) and leads to active male/passive female pairings. Even when Freud "warns" against the inadequacy of active male/passive female pairing, the only activities he attributes to the female are activities related to motherhood, such as breast-feeding. To Irigaray, the identification of the feminine with the maternal has been a functional idea in the whole patriarchal intellectual tradition extending from Plato to Freud. By freezing the woman as "the mother", masculine identity is being confirmed and reinsured:

> Now, if this ego (masculine ego) is to be valuable, some mirror is needed to reassure it and re-insure it of its value. Woman will be the foundation for this specular duplication, giving man back 'his' image and repeating it as 'the same'. If another image, another mirror were to intervene, this inevitably would entail the risk of mortal crisis. Woman will therefore be this sameness – or at least its mirror image- and, in her role of mother, she will facilitate the repetition of the same, in contempt for her difference. Her own sexual difference (Irigaray, 1985:54).

However, Irigaray's approach to maternity is different from Beauvoir's distant and even hostile approach that can be criticized for precluding the possibility that maternity can be a joyful and enriching experience. Unlike Beauvoir, Irigaray does not argue that the experience of maternity itself is an obstacle to the woman's prospects of realizing herself. Rather, what she criticizes is that, Freud reinforces patriarchal thought by subordinating women and maternity to a desubjectivized social role, meaning that the mother identity is expected to supersede the woman identity (Irigaray, 1991:42). Freud reinforces this perception of maternity through his argument that the woman's wish to procreate is to substitute for the envy for a penis: "The feminine situation is established if the wish for a penis is replaced by one for a baby, if, that is, a baby takes the place of a penis in accordance with an ancient symbolic equivalence" (Freud cited in Irigaray, 1985:73). Irigaray's opposition to this idea is twofold: First, Freud implies that full femininity comes along with maternity; therefore femininity is absorbed in maternity (Irigaray, 1985:74). Secondly, she relates this idea of Freud to the perception that the child is not only a substitute for a

penis, but also a product of a penis, which is a perception that ignores female sexual organs and the role of femininity in the process of the formation of a child. While mentioning babies, Freud puts the emphasis on how the penis relates to the baby, but not to the womb. This leads Irigaray to make the argument that "In this economy, woman's job is to tend the seed man 'gives' to her, to watch over the interests of this 'gift' deposited with her and to return it to its owner in due course" (p.75). According to Freud, the role of the woman in maternity is then to "guarantee the father's power to reproduce and represent [himself] and to perpetuate his gender and his species" (p.74). It is possible to argue that Freud is reinforcing patriarchy by excluding "the feminine", denying femininity the central role even in the experience of maternity.

Regarding the notion of "penis envy", Irigaray again seems frustrated by the psychoanalytic attitude of defining woman's sexual life in terms of her lack of the male organ and refers to the concept of penis envy as "an essential factor in establishing the primacy of the male organ" (Irigaray, 1985:58). After all, the woman's life is almost completely tied to the "penis envy": It is because of penis envy that she hates her mother, rejects all women including herself, turns to her father, then desires a child in order to get something equivalent to the penis, it is again the penis envy which determines her relations of rivalry with other women, as well as her interest in social affairs. The subordination of all kinds of experiences of the woman to the "penis envy" leads Irigaray to ask the crucial question: "Does this mean that women's sexual evolution can never be characterized with reference to the female sex itself?" (Irigaray,1991:119). It is once more possible to observe Irigaray's emphasis on "difference" rather than equality with regard to her criticism to the notion of "penis envy", because her opposition focuses on Freud's attitude of overlooking the specificity of female sex in describing feminine sexuality. According to her, the psychoanalytic method should open up space for an alternative interpretation such as one that would also take into account the effects of the lack of womb in male sexual experience, or the effects of breast atrophy in the male (Irigaray 1985:23).

However, it is essential to emphasize that while criticizing Freud, Irigaray acknowledges that Freud is describing and accounting for how female and male sexuality develops, not inventing it or recommending that it should develop in that way. But what she opposes is that, he takes the way female sexuality develops as an ahistorical norm, ignoring the role that historical, social and cultural effects play. Her opposition to ahistoricity in psychoanalysis is also evident in her text *The Poverty of Psychoanalysis* in which she sounds quite frustrated with the circle of psychoanalysts:

> According to you any psychoanalyst who questions the history, culture or politics in which psychoanalysis is inscribed is no longer a psychoanalyst…. It (psychoanalysis) must be whole, absolute and without any historical foundations. Its theory and practice rest upon historical nothingness (Irigaray, 1991:80).

Moreover, Freud takes anatomy as the "irrefutable criterion of truth" and bases his arguments strictly on this criterion, whereas in fact science is also "historical", in progress and open to different interpretations. For example, Freud essentializes and solidifies the justification of male aggressive activity and female passivity based on the activities of sperm and ovum; however, it was discovered after his lifetime that the ovum is not that passive and can actually choose a sperm (Irigaray, 1991:120). At the end of the day, Irigaray argues, Freud's attitude of taking the way female sexuality develops in patriarchal society as "the norm", in turn reinforces patriarchal discourse.

Up to this point, it is clear that the gist of Irigaray's critique of Freud lies in her will to establish the "sexual difference" of the female, as opposed the Freudian perspective which she criticizes for viewing the female as a deformed form of the male and explaining femininity with reference to masculinity. This also clarifies her position in the "equality vs. difference" debate within feminist theory. Before moving on to the fundamentals of Beauvoir's challenge to Freud, it is essential to underline that Irigaray's critique of psychoanalysis is an insider critique that aims to renovate psychoanalysis from a feminine perspective. As opposed to Beauvoir, Irigaray does not mean to disregard the significance of the psychosexual dimension in human experience. To the contrary, she maintains that the real cause of women's oppression is psychosexual in origin (Stavro, 1999). Therefore, legal, economic and political reforms that egalitarian feminist standpoint prioritizes, are bound to fail as long as social, economic and political world remains within the dominance of male imaginary.

Simone de Beauvoir, on the other hand, lays out a dramatically different critique of psychoanalysis in *The Second Sex*, a difference that owes to her existentialist stance as well as her egalitarian feminism. The first crucial point of her critique is the argument that the main weakness in psychoanalysis is the systematic rejection of the free choice of the existent (Beauvoir, 1974:76). She finds Freud's emphasis on the "psychosexual dimension" to be determinist, contrary to Irigaray. It should be emphasized that her position requires such a criticism, or to put it in other words, she has to bring this criticism to psychoanalysis, otherwise she would undermine her own existentialist and egalitarian feminist point of view. The very central motive in *The Second Sex* is based on the rejection of the argument that women are bound by any essential features of their sexuality, and the emphasis on the possibility for women to take charge of their own existence and escape immanence. This brings her to the point of arguing that once women are provided with the prospects of active participation in the public sphere on totally equal basis with men, not only will they find the possibility to reach transcendence, but also will there be a change in female psychology, even though gradual. Therefore, she rejects the psychoanalytic point of view for replacing choice with "drive", disregarding women's aspirations to take the responsibility of their existence, hence giving women no space to "transcend". To this rejection, she adds the dimension of morality and criticizes psychoanalysis for dissociating sexuality

and morality, for this association also implies exclusion of any prospects for choice, in her view. Beauvoir's suggestion is to "place women in a world of values and give her behaviour a dimension of liberty", for she believes "she (the woman) has the power to choose between the assertion of her transcendence and her alienation as object, she is not the plaything of contradictory derives; she devises solutions of diverse values in the ethical scale" (Beauvoir, 1974:82). It is crucial to underline that by this suggestion, what Beauvoir does is nothing less than rejecting the unconscious, the very base of psychoanalysis.

The second fundamental point in Beauvoir's critique of Freud is her emphasis on the role of social patterns and historical context in the oppression of women. She argues that Freud dissociates sexuality from the world outside, disregarding the influence of history, culture and society. To her, this disregard leads psychoanalysis to take some facts as given: For example, psychoanalysis takes as a given that a little girl is ashamed to urinate with her bottom uncovered, but does not look into the social source of this shame (Beauvoir, 1974:77). At first it might seem like Beauvoir joins Irigaray's critique of "a-historicity of psychoanalysis", but she has a different stance because she condemns "the very language of psychoanalysis" for this language suggests that in psychoanalysis, "the drama of the individual unfolds within him" whereas "a life is a relation to the world, and the individual defines himself by making own choices through the world about him" (Beauvoir, 1974:80-81). Once again, she is subordinating the unconscious to the direct effects of the "external world" and emphasizing the "choices", hence actually denying the existence of an unconscious in the sense that Freud refers to when using the concept.

Thirdly, it is necessary to draw attention to Beauvoir's claim that by replacing value with authority and choice with drive, psychoanalysis imposes a "concept of normality", a certain path of fears, sublimations, repressions that one is obliged to go through, as a substitute for morality and choice: "If a subject does not show in his totality the development considered as normal, it will be said that his development is arrested, and it will be interpreted as a lack, negation, never as a positive decision" (Beauvoir, 1974:82). However, with regard to this criticism, it is possible to argue that Beauvoir was misjudging and misunderstanding Freud. Juliet Mitchell (1974), on the other hand, brings a strong criticism to the claim that Freud was prescribing a normal pattern of behavior by pointing out the fact that "the very nub of his (Freud's) work was the elimination of an absolute difference between abnormality and normality" (Mitchell, 1974:11). According to Mitchell, Freud was doing the exact opposite of what Beauvoir claims he was doing: He was trying to say that so-called normality is in it 'neurotic', 'pathogenic' and 'psychotic'.

The only credit Beauvoir gives to psychoanalytic method is related to the fact that the female behaviour patterns pointed out by psychoanalysis are really observable and generalizable. Although she acknowledges this, she categorically rejects the basic premises and founding blocks of psychoanalytic method, as demonstrated above, and makes explicit that she "declines to accept the method of psychoanalysis" (Beauvoir, 1974:81). In this respect, Beau-

voir's critique of psychoanalysis is fundamentally different from Irigaray's. Irigaray does not disregard or try to reduce the significance of the unconscious and the psychosexual dimension, what she criticizes is that the female sexuality has not been recognized as a separate sexuality but has been defined in terms of the male sexuality. Beauvoir, on the other hand, argues that a person can be aware of his/her psychosexual drives and overcome them, "transcend them" by free choice. As mentioned above, this argument in fact corresponds to a total rejection of the very basis of psychoanalysis: The rejection of the idea of "the unconscious".

Mitchell's Defense

As opposed to both Irigaray and Beauvoir, Juliet Mitchell commits herself to defending Freud and reconciling his ideas with feminism in her book titled *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (1974). The main argument that Mitchell puts forward in terms of her defense of Freud is based on a different reading of his work. She argues that psychoanalysis is not a-historical. To the contrary, psychoanalysis aims to show how we incorporate our historical heritage of the ideas and laws of human society within the unconscious mind instead of the conscious mind (Mitchell, 1974:xvi). What this argument corresponds to is that, humans are born with an unconscious that is full of the heritage shaped by the ideas and laws of human society. The implication of this assertion boils down to the perception of the unconscious as a social and historical phenomenon. For example, regarding "penis – envy", Mitchell argues that the word "penis" in this notion does not refer to the anatomical organ, but to the ideas that people have about the penis within general culture and within the order of human society; hence "penis envy" actually connotes "power-envy". Otherwise, she says, the penis envy would be an either laughable or a dangerous notion.

Furthermore, Mitchell defends Freud against the accusation of biological determinism. According to her reading, psychoanalysis has nothing to do with biology, but Freud's interest in how "our mental life reflects in a transformed way, what culture has already done with our biological needs and constitutions" (Mitchell, 1974:401) has been misunderstood by feminists. However, Mitchell admits that Freud has not emphasized his point forcefully, thus he opened the way to misunderstanding. From the points above, it should be clear that Mitchell's interpretation of Freud is based on the claim that Freud actually did not regard the unconscious as something dissociated from the external conditions and social reality. She contends that Freud's understanding of the social reality is broader and more profound than his feminist critiques:

> Feminist criticisms of Freud claim that he was denying what really happens, and that the women he analysed were simply responding to really oppressive conditions. But there is no such thing as a simple response to reality. External reality has to be acquired. To deny that there is anything other than external reality gets us back to the same proposition: It is a denial of the unconscious (Mitchell, 1974: 12).

Following from this point, Mitchell argues that when critiques of Freud condemn him for not taking into account social reality, they are displaying a very limited understanding of social reality because what Freud tries to do is to demonstrate "mental representation of the reality of society" (Mitchell, 1974:406). However, there is a highly problematic aspect in Mitchell's study. In her defense of Freud, she is constantly coming back to the same theme: The unconscious carries the heritage of historical and social reality, and it also reflects the reality of the society that the individual is living in: "The unconscious is the way man lives his humanity in harmony and conflict with his particular and socially determined environment" (Mitchell, 1974:381). At many points, she seems to be stretching Freud too far in the direction of what she wants to do with his ideas. As a socialist feminist, Mitchell's ultimate aim in her work is to give a convincing account of how the structures of patriarchy are preserved and reinforced in the bourgeois nuclear family. Therefore, she is rejoicing over the fact that Freud established the psychoanalytic method as a result of his investigations on individuals of Viennese bourgeoisie:

> Freud was investigating (by and large) the Viennese bourgeoisie, but what he discovered was at one and the same time limited to that place and class, specific to the psychic make-up of man under capitalism and generalizable to human culture as such. Instead of lamenting the specifics of Freud's milieu, we should rejoice – nothing could be more useful. He examined the 'eternal' structures of patriarchy in what is for us their most essential particularity: The bourgeois, patriarchal family (Mitchell, 1974:380).

Furthermore, Mitchell argues that a feminist "cultural revolution" in parallel with the overthrow of capitalist economy would be able to construct "a new unconscious": "When the potentialities of the complexities of capitalism – both economic and ideological – are released by its overthrow, new structures will gradually come to be represented in the unconscious. It is the task of feminism to insist on their birth" (p.415).

The argument that patriarchy and the unconscious can be changed by social and cultural revolution in the long term, locates Mitchell in the same cohort with Simone de Beauvoir: Beauvoir refers to radical transformation of institutions and relations, and her argument is that such radical transformation would bring about a change in women's psychology and consciousness. This is obviously the position of an egalitarian feminist. However, while Mitchell seemingly tries to defend Freud by emphasizing the historicity of the unconscious, she is at pains to locate the unconscious into a realm where it does not belong to; into a realm where you can "change" by choices, by social and cultural revolution.

Conclusion

Simone de Beauvoir's response to Freud could be regarded as a natural extension of her ideas: If she had accepted the effect of the unconscious and psy-

chosexual "drives" on human behaviour and experience, how would it be possible to defend the possibility of a "transcendent woman" who, as an outcome of her own choices, lifts herself up from the immanent femininity and reach the realm of a human being? In general, her egalitarian feminist arguments are very much open to criticism. First, she falls short of explaining properly how an individual, be it a man or a woman, "takes charge of his/her existence" or "transcends him/herself", and as a result, she draws the picture of an individual who is emptied of human condition. Secondly, she assumes that in a patriarchal system, men do have the chance to "transcendence" and full liberation, which is highly questionable. Thirdly and most importantly, she is locating the "plane of equality" somewhere closer to the male domain with her view that becoming fully human requires overcoming female biology. Is "fully human" a category that is closer to the male rather than the female?

It would exceed the scope of this paper to give a full critique of "The Second Sex", but Beauvoir's three assumptions mentioned above are essential to underline for the purposes of this article because those assumptions also constitute the weaknesses in Beauvoir's critique of Freud. Ultimately, her critique of psychoanalysis is remarkably mismatched, for she is rejecting its basic premises in the first place.

On the other hand, Irigaray's critique of psychoanalysis is an insider critique: Hers is a quest to restore psychoanalysis with the conviction of a different femininity that is not a deformed form of masculinity. Actually, "Speculum of the Other Woman" owes its strength to the insightful identification of the common thread in Western intellectual tradition, all the way from Plato to Freud. That common thread is the denial of a sexual difference and existence of a feminine subjectivity. Equality of the sexes cannot be established without firstly establishing the "difference" of femininity, and it is this perspective from which Irigaray is responding to Freud.

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